



May 7, 2021

Testimony in **SUPPORT** of LD 1663

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

Dear Members of the Committee,

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **LD 1663 – An Act to Improve Boating Safety on Maine Waters**. Midcoast Conservancy's mission is to protect vital land and waters on a scale that matters, and our service area includes popular boating locations like Damariscotta Lake.

Boat use on Maine lakes is increasing, especially with the pandemic. LD 1663 would provide the chance to educate Maine boaters on boating laws that **increase public safety, and protect our lake ecosystems**. We are particularly concerned about boater safety as a swimmer was killed by a boat strike in 2018 on Damariscotta Lake, and the lake continues to be used by swimmers. A boater safety course would allow for increased awareness and compliance with headway speed zones that not only protect swimmers, but also shorelines from erosion and protect vital wildlife habitat.

In addition, a boater safety course could provide information to lake users about **invasive aquatic species**. Last year our Courtesy Boat Inspectors conducted over 1800 inspections at public boat launches on Damariscotta Lake, an increase from just over 1000 inspections in 2019. While our CBI program provides an important avenue for education of boaters about invasive aquatic species, our inspectors cannot staff the launches throughout the week, so many boaters are missed. Maine has been largely sheltered from invasive aquatic species, but with increased boat traffic it may only be a matter of time before we see an increase in infestations.

For these reasons, we respectfully request the committee to vote **in favor** of LD 1663 and that the boater safety course be comprehensive in including information about headway speed zones and invasive aquatic species.

Sincerely,

Patricia Nease

Watershed Coordinator; Damariscotta Lake Lead on behalf of:
Midcoast Conservancy

Clean Water. Thriving Communities. Land for All.

