



“Protecting the lakes, ponds, and streams of the Cobbossee Watershed through community engagement, conservation, and education.”

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January 31, 2024

Dear Chair LaFountain, Chair Landry, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

I am writing in **support of LD 2141, *An Act to Enhance Protections for and Better Address Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations in Inland Waters of the State***. As the Director of Conservation for the Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed, an environmental non-profit located in central Maine, I work on Aquatic Invasive Species management programs as well as with a large community of stakeholders who are passionate about Maine lakes and healthy waters. As a Maine resident, I grew up on Messalonskee Lake in Belgrade, and have a personal drive to protect our waters as well.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the current management structure and funding avenues in our state are inadequate to tackle the upcoming challenges. In the Cobbossee Watershed, we are dealing with three known aquatic invasive plants while preparing for the next one. The presence of invasive Swollen Bladderwort and Curly Leaf Pondweed in two major bordering watersheds is causing concern among community members and recreationists on our 28 lakes, ponds, and streams. In nearby Lake Arrowhead, Brittle Naiad is causing significant damage. Some of these newer invasive species spread through seeds and larvae that are too small for the human eye to detect. To stay ahead of the infestations, Maine must act quickly. Other states in the US have had to impose much stricter guidelines and regulations on boat traffic and inspection requirements *after* discovering major infestations. Maine has an opportunity to learn from these states and make changes before reaching that threshold.

Maine's water bodies are a significant attraction for our state as they offer abundant fishing opportunities, remain largely healthy and free of invasive species, display a stunning diversity of plants and animals, and welcome people from all backgrounds. As a member of this community, I urge you to endorse LD 2141 and invest in our state's future.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Alex Dyer
Director of Conservation, Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed
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