

January 31, 2024

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

As a life-long summer resident of Lake Wesserunsett, as Trustee and Secretary of the Lake Wesserunsett Association (LWA), and as a member of our Aquatic Biodiversity Committee, I would like to express my full support for LD 2141, a bill to fund critical work to reduce the spread of invasive aquatic species (IAS).

I support the \$2,000,000 appropriations to address serious infestations in the State. I also support the mandates to review and strengthen existing watercraft inspection protocols, as well as surface use restrictions.

For the past 10 years or so, I have managed the CBI cost share grant for LWA and helped oversee the program. We can afford only a part-time program. This part-time program is still incredibly expensive (up to nearly \$19,000) and time-consuming. It is also full of yawning gaps in coverage.

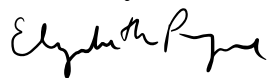
We watch anxiously each year as the list of aquatic invasive plant infestations grows, moving north up the interstate corridor to nearby lakes, streams, and even the Kennebec River.

The number of infested waterbodies in an easy day's drive from Lake Wesserunsett is troubling. Many of the Belgrades have infestations, the Mill Stream in Norridgwock has an infestation and even more troubling, the Kennebec River has several infestations (Variable leaf milfoil and curly leaf pondweed) within a very short distance of our lake. I believe the Kennebec River is among the most frequented waterbodies of boats that use our lake. As far as I know, there is no plan to address that infestation. The DEP has given us a 54 (high) risk score for likelihood of infestation. We are worried that it's just a matter of time.

I would like to reinforce part of the testimony submitted by LWA's Board of Trustees: As infestations increase in number and severity, the cost of managing them and reducing their spread also increases. Consequently, the State needs to do more to support the many non-profits and volunteers working hard to protect our lakes.

I urge you to support LD 2141 to protect the future health of Maine's lakes. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Payne

Trustee & Secretary of LWA

Life-long summer resident of Lake Wesserunsett

Elizabeth Payne
Orono
LD 2141

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