

Neither for nor against

LD 2141 An Act to Enhance Protections for and Better Address Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations

Dear Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,

I am Marilyn Wescott, a resident on Panther Pond in Raymond, ME which flows into the east side of Sebago Lake. I have patrolled for aquatic invasive plants in Raymond's lakes for over 20 years and scores of lakes across the entire state for 15 years. I have volunteered on many of the water bodies with known infestations and worked with many others who have given countless hours in trying to keep ahead of these aggressive species.

Just this past year Dennis Roberge on Mousam Lake removed by hand 1,068 gallons of swollen bladderwort (*Utricularia inflata*) in 255 hours and another man on the same lake took out 200 gallons in 30-40 hours and a dive team of 30 people in 3 hours took out 400 gallons. Dennis has spent hours and hours over the years removing European naiad and variable milfoil from several other lakes. So have two residents of Lake Arrowhead. The Passamaquoddy tribe has orchestrated ongoing teams for tracking and removal of variable milfoil in Big, Long and Lewey Lakes and Grand Falls Flowage. Just below our dam on Panther, volunteers and divers over the past decade have cleaned up the Jordan River flowing into Sebago Lake with the result that only a few stray implants remained in 2022 and 23, so it won't be long before it will be totally eradicated.

Over the years where there have been concentrated efforts, **success** has resulted, such that, as of last year 7 lakes had been removed from DEP's infested list. We do have +- 33 lakes in Maine with known infestations.

Volunteers and lake associations cannot continue to tackle this alone. DEP is underfunded. The **state has to decide its priorities and make a commitment**; our lakes, as well as our marine resources, are vital to this state we all care about. Boat sticker money and grants and private donations do not cover the effort needed to keep invasive species at bay. We have a chance of keeping ahead of the threat if the commitment is there.

**If the \$2 million** part of this bill can be used for mitigation where DEP and IF&W discern the infested waters can be cleared of invasives, then that will go a long way toward stopping the spread. In this regard, half measures do not work. Focus, persistence, and utilizing the right methods (most multi-pronged) do work. If these funds can be used thusly, I am wholeheartedly in support of LD2141.

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