

Letter in OPPOSITION to LD 173—An Act to Exempt Certain Watercraft from Registration Requirements submitted to the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

February 9, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Baldacci, Chair Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee.

My name is Thomas J. Arminio. I am the president of the Greater Minnehonk Lake Association in Mount Vernon, I am on the Board of Directors of the 30 Mile River Watershed Association, I coordinate the invasive plant patrols on Minnehonk Lake, and I am also a courtesy boat inspector. The members of the Greater Minnehonk Lake Association, the municipalities and lake associations of the 30 Mile River Watershed Association, my fellow invasive plant patrollers and my fellow courtesy boat inspectors take the health of Maine lakes extremely seriously. We volunteer innumerable hours and work as a community toward the goal of clean and healthy lakes, ponds, and streams in Maine. We are dedicated to protecting and enhancing lake water quality and habitat, which will benefit everyone in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter in OPPOSITION to LD 173. This bill exempts canoes, kayaks, and rowboats with up to 100 HP motors from boat registration requirements. I have serious concerns about the potential impacts to Maine lakes.

First, the 100 HP limit seems excessively high. Additionally, there will be a loss of revenue that supports important lake protection programs at IFW. With no clear definition of a “rowboat,” I am concerned that many larger boats could be equipped with oarlocks and consider themselves a rowboat, even though they exclusively use a motor. This bill opens the door for many types of boats to be exempt from registration fees. The loss of revenue would have a serious negative impact on the department’s capacity to conduct lake protection work.

Even though the registration exemption would still require boat owners to purchase a Lake and River Protection Sticker, in reality there will be little incentive. Exempting individuals leaves them very likely to skip the purchase of a sticker, resulting in decreased revenue that funds important invasive species risk reduction and removal work and courtesy boat inspection programs. Both efforts are essential to reducing the spread of invasive species. Exempting a group of motorized boaters without assurance for compliance with the sticker requirement means people whose motors are part of the problem will not be responsible for helping pay for the solution.

I urge the committee to maintain existing registration standards and vote NO on this bill.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Arminio

Captain, USN (Ret.)