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LD 173

I am writing to you to oppose LD 173. This bill exempts canoes, kayaks, and rowboats with up to 100 HP motors from boat registration requirements. While initially this may seem like a benign exemption, I have grave concerns about the potential impacts to Maine's lakes.

Loss of revenue that supports important lake protection programs at IFW:
As you know, boat registration fees are put to good use, paying for vital services from the state. With no clear definition of a "rowboat", and with the horse power limit set so incredibly high, I am extremely 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, perhaps the majority of boats in Maine, to be exempt from registration fees! The Department would not only lose registration fees but also additional revenue from the Coast Guard that comes with every registered boat. The loss of revenue would have a serious impact on the department's capacity for lake protection work, and would have detrimental effects on our lakes and ponds from those willing to push the boundaries of this bill.

Loss of revenue from the Lake and River Protection Sticker program: 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 or easy avenue for that to happen. Other boats exempted from registration (races, regattas, and water ski exhibitions) are all part of organized events that have oversight and mechanisms to distribute Lake and River Protection Stickers to participants. Exempting individual boaters who are not part of an organized group leaves them very likely to skip the purchase of a Sticker, resulting in decreased revenue that funds important invasive species risk reduction work, including Courtesy Boat Inspection programs and invasive removal work. 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 share in the responsibility for helping pay for the solution.

I urge the committee to maintain existing registration standards and vote no on this bill!