

Letter in SUPPORT of LD 171—An Act to Enhance Protections Regarding Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations in Inland Waters of the State

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 SUPPORT of LD 171. This bill helps reduce the risk of aquatic invasive species spread by focusing on key management actions on infested lakes.

Invasive aquatic plants pose a serious risk to Maine's inland waters. They outcompete native plants, with potentially devastating effects on aquatic ecosystems, water quality, native wildlife and fisheries, recreational opportunities, and property values.

Maine has so far not seen the more devastating invasive species outbreaks plaguing our neighboring states. That is because of much hard work over the last two decades by Maine's lake organizations, lake associations, and many thousands of volunteers, as well as by the Departments of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Environmental Protection staff, and by legislators like you who have repeatedly supported this work, both with funds and with forward-thinking, proactive policies.

This bill focuses on several important areas of risk reduction that desperately need attention.

- While we often think of invasive aquatic plants coming "from away," there are 37 waterbodies in Maine with current infestations. This bill adds monitoring of inland waters already infested with aquatic invasives to the joint aquatic invasive species prevention program shared between IFW and DEP.
- Recognizing that boats coming out of heavily infested waters pose a greater risk of invasive spread than those coming out of other waters, this bill asks IFW and DEP to

assess if current protocols are adequate for these waterbodies, and to develop guidelines for stronger protocols where needed. Given the difference in risk, and the higher probability of spread from these sources, a review of protocols and if needed a strengthening of inspection standards at these sites is a reasonable undertaking that will protect long-term lake health.

- Given the constitutional right to fish and fowl on Maine lakes, surface use restrictions can be difficult to place and retain and be emotionally fraught. However, boats passing through areas with invasive infestations are more likely to pick up plant fragments and transport those fragments to new lakes. Surface restrictions in areas of the worst infestations are a common-sense tool that can reduce that spread so having consistency and clarity around the use of this management tool would benefit lake health.

Different agencies have had different perspectives on when and where surface use restrictions should be applied as a management tool. This bill includes a directive to review surface use restrictions on inland waters. Having agencies work together on this issue makes sense.

I see only positive outcomes in terms of invasive species risk reduction by the common-sense measures enacted in this bill. I urge the committee to vote YES on this bill.

Sincerely,  
Thomas J. Arminio  
Captain, USN (Ret.)