

Robert Capers
Fayette
LD 171

To members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

My name is Bob Capers. I am a resident of Fayette, where I serve as a volunteer, coordinating surveys of ponds for invasive aquatic plants. By training, I am a plant biologist and have several years of experience doing research on invasive species, mostly in Connecticut. I have to tell you that, while working on invasive plants in Connecticut, my colleagues and I were envious of the situation in Maine, where the state has been aggressive in setting up systems to monitor invasives and to inspect boats going in and out of the state's many lakes. The level of protection provided in Maine was far higher than anything Connecticut was willing to even consider. I applaud you for that.

I encourage the committee to lend its support to the subject of this hearing, LD 171, which would establish a review procedure to consider whether the state could be doing more to protect its many lakes, either through stricter watercraft inspection procedures in lakes that we know are already infested or to limit boating activity to prevent the spread of invasive plants in those lakes or those that are not yet infested. As I'm sure the committee members are aware, a study done at UMaine last year placed the value of Maine's lakes and ponds at \$14 billion and also found that the lakes generate several billion dollars in revenue each year. Other studies have found that the value of homes on lakes can decline precipitously when they become infested with an invasive plant, and nobody wants that. Plus, once a lake has an invasive plant in it, it is virtually impossible to get rid of it. At that point, the plants can only be managed, which is always difficult and always expensive. The state of Florida now spends \$45 million every year just on managing invasive aquatic plants. These natural resources clearly are worth protecting, without even considering their aesthetic, spiritual and ecological importance.

It is imperative that we keep these plants out of any lake in which they are not already established. An aggressive boat inspection program is an important component of the state's prevention program, as are limits to boating activity that could spread the plants around. But there may be more that we can do. This legislation would provide the state with an opportunity to identify additional steps it might take to keep invasive plants out of our lakes. Truly, it can afford to do no less.