



Testimony 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 12, 2025*

Dear Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

7 Lakes Alliance, a nonprofit organization committed to conserving the lands and waters of the Belgrade Lakes Region for all, fully supports *LD 171, An Act to Enhance Protections Regarding Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations in Inland Waters of the State*.

This bill will help reduce the spread of invasive aquatic species (IAS) between waterbodies by focusing on three critical components of statewide IAS management programs 1) monitoring through active survey, 2) prevention through Courtesy Boat Inspections, and 3) temporarily restricting access to heavily infested areas.

As a regional leader in invasive aquatic monitoring, prevention, remediation, and education, each component of this bill has a significant impact on our IAS operations at 7 Lakes.

Monitor Inland Waters Infested with Invasive Aquatic Plants

7 Lakes surveys the entire perimeter of each major waterbody in the Belgrade Lakes on an annual basis. Despite frequent and thorough survey efforts during the summer, we have recently discovered established populations of invasive curly-leaf pondweed in North Pond growing in early May 2024. This experience was a much needed reminder that invasive species are hardier than our native plants and are well adapted to grow outside of what we consider the normal “growing season.” It also demonstrates that there could be infestations across the state that we are unaware of due to infrequent or limited survey efforts. Bolstering monitoring efforts in all of Maine’s lakes will ensure necessary rapid response initiatives to remove or treat the infestation before further spread. .

Strengthen Watercraft Inspection Protocols on Heavily Infested Waterbodies

7 Lakes is fortunate enough to support a strong CBI program with good coverage for most of the growing season. CBIs have prevented invasive plant fragments from leaving our infested waterbodies, thus preventing infestations elsewhere. Other waterbodies with limited CBI coverage and remediation efforts are a threat to all Maine lakes as invasive plant fragments are allowed to generate and leave unmanaged infestations. Allocating more funds, resources, and

restrictions to severely infested waterbodies will benefit all Maine lakes by limiting further spread. Recently, an invasive zooplankton called the spiny waterflea was introduced and is wreaking havoc in Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire. Given the close proximity and similar water chemistry to New Hampshire lakes, Maine should prepare for the inevitable transport of the spiny water flea and other invasive invertebrates from boats crossing state lines. New boat cleaning protocols are needed to address the spread of invasive invertebrates.

Review Policies and Procedures for Surface Use Restrictions

We credit a large part of our success in minimizing the generation and spread of variable-leaf milfoil fragments in Great Pond to a surface use restriction (SUR) granted by the commissioners of IFW and DEP from 2012-2022, which prevented motorcraft from entering our primary infestation in Great Meadow Stream. While the SUR was in effect, we saw minimal spread of fragments outside of the restricted area. In 2023, the year the SUR was lifted in Great Pond, we found invasive milfoil in two new areas, breaking an 8-year streak of no intra-waterbody spread. Great Meadow Stream remained a popular destination for paddlers and bird watching during the SUR and the stream saw significant increase in nesting waterfowl including: loons, sandhill cranes, eastern bittern, and geese.

Considering the long-term financial commitment required to manage invasive aquatic organisms and the need to limit spread outside of heavily infested waterbodies, we urge you to support LD 171.

Sharon Mann
Invasives Aquatics Program Director
sharon.mann@7lakesalliance.org
7 Lakes Alliance

