

February 11, 2025

Testimony in SUPPORT LD 171, An Act to Enhance Protections Regarding Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations in Inland Waters of the State Submitted to Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

To: Chair Baldacci, Chair Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee:

I serve as the president of the Torsey Pond Association, an all-volunteer association that represents over 100 lakefront owners. Torsey Pond is located in the towns of Mount Vernon and Readfield in Kennebec County and is the headwaters for the Cobbossee Watershed. Unfortunately, Torsey is surrounded by other lakes that are battling infestations of invasive plants, at great cost (tens of thousands of dollars) to Maine's DEP, non-profits involved in lake protection and lakeshore owners.

Every summer, dozens of volunteers work hard at the Torsey Pond boat launch as courtesy boat inspectors (CBIs); and our organization pays for paid CBIs that are provided by the Friends of Cobbossee Watershed to inspect boats as they prepare to launch into Torsey Pond. This time and money, while significant to our small organization, is nothing compared to the amount we all would have to pay if an invasive plant found its way into Torsey Pond. Not to mention the loss of habitat and lakefront property values should an invasive take hold in the pond. **Prevention** of infestation is far preferable to trying to mitigate or eliminate an infestation.

LD 171 would help reduce the risk of aquatic invasive species spread by strengthening watercraft inspection protocols at lakes infested with invasive aquatic plants. This is very important because uninfested lakes feel that they are "only one boat away" from becoming infested with an invasive plant from a visiting boat.

LD 171 would also prioritize monitoring inland waters infested with invasive aquatic plants. This would be very helpful in preventing the spread of invasives from infested to uninfested waters.

Maine lakes are treasures for us all: they provide abundant clean water resources, valuable wildlife habitat, and recreational and sporting opportunities for Mainers and visitors alike. It is imperative that we do everything we can to protect the health of these treasures. LD 171 is a step in the right direction to increasing protection of Maine's lakes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Darcy Whittemore
President, Torsey Pond Association
Readfield, Maine
darcywhittemore@gmail.com

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