



Testimony in Support of LD 2101, An Act to Strengthen Shoreland Zoning Enforcement
Testimony by Nick Bennett, Staff Scientist
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Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government.

My name is Nick Bennett, and I am the Staff Scientist with the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM is Maine's largest environmental advocacy group with more than 30,000 members and supporters. I am testifying in support of LD 2101.

Maine has some of the most spectacular lakes in the world, but a growing number of them are under threat from increased development and its associated runoff pollution. Although Maine has stringent shoreland zoning rules that, when followed, help prevent the worst effects of runoff from nearshore development, municipalities often have difficulty enforcing these rules. This is especially true in cases where wealthy developers can easily afford to pay the fines associated with inappropriate development that results in excessive removal of vegetation and runoff from unnecessarily large driveways and roads.

LD 2101 would give municipalities (and the Land Use Planning Commission in the Unorganized Territories) additional tools to enforce shoreland zoning violations, such as:

- Denying or staying building and other municipal permits to developers who violate shoreland zoning rules; and
- Taking liens on the properties of violators to cover the costs of prosecuting violations or unpaid fines.

According to the Department of Environmental Protection,¹ lakes generate about \$3.5 billion per year for Maine's economy and provide approximately 52,000 jobs. Streams are important resources, too. They provide much of the habitat for brook trout in Maine. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, total fishing expenditures in Maine were \$371 million in 2011, the latest year for which data are available. A large percentage of this economic activity is related to fishing for brook trout, which are very sensitive to runoff pollution.

Given the high value of Maine lakes and the difficulties many municipalities have in enforcing shoreland zoning standards against flagrant violators with deep pockets, passing LD 2101 is a good way to help level the playing field.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

¹ See <https://www.maine.gov/dep/water/lakes/>