



Feb 6, 2024

Re: LD 2101, An Act to Strengthen Shoreland Zoning Enforcement

Dear members of the State and Local Government Committee,

On behalf of Lake Stewards of Maine (LSM), we are writing neither for nor against **LD 2101, An Act to Strengthen Shoreland Zoning Enforcement**. Maine's shoreland zoning laws play a pivotal role in safeguarding lake water quality and wildlife habitats, yet enforcing them poses significant challenges.

Lake Stewards of Maine is a statewide nonprofit. Our mission is to help preserve Maine's lakes through volunteer citizen involvement in scientific data collection and promote lake stewardship through the dissemination of credible scientific information to educate the public. LSM is the oldest continuous volunteer lake water quality program in the nation. Currently, over 1,200 trained volunteer community scientists are dedicated to monitoring the health of approximately 530 lakes statewide.

While all land that drains to Maine's lakes (the watershed) influences the health and vitality of a lake, the immediate shoreline is the most influential in determining the health of the lake's ecosystem. The health of the shoreline has a direct influence on the area of the lake immediately adjacent to it (the littoral zone) to the shore. Over hanging trees provide shade for fish and leaves provide an important food source for insects which in turn feed fish. It is also the transition zone between lake and upland habitat, an important area for wildlife travel. Imagine salamanders and frogs trying to move from the lake environment up into the woods traversing lawn, riprap or other unnatural man made or installed structures. For them, an unnatural shoreline is a biological desert and a mind field.

The shoreline area is also the last chance to buffer human disturbances on the lake's health. A ribbon of complex woody vegetation around a lakes shore can filter runoff from roofs, driveways, and septic systems. Removal and/or alteration of the shoreline removes the lake's last line of protection from pollutants.

In order to protect the health of our Maine lakes, we must protect the shoreline. We encourage this Committee and other state agencies to explore and employ a variety of tools and methods to protect our lakes by protecting and restoring the shoreline.

Sincerely,

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