

Testimony in Support of LD 2101: An Act to Strengthen Shoreland Zoning Enforcement

Written by Tristan Taber, Aquatic Scientist, Landscape Architect

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Dear Committee for State and Local Government,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the crucial LD 2101 addressing Maine's shoreland zoning laws. As an aquatic scientist and landscape architect, I strongly endorse this bill, recognizing the pivotal role of these regulations in safeguarding lake water quality and wildlife habitats.

Shoreland regulations play a pivotal role in safeguarding lake water quality and wildlife habitats. When shoreland zoning rules are ignored it leads to adverse effects such as shoreline destabilization and water pollution. These laws are challenging to enforce at present for many municipalities. The concerns around complicated and expensive litigation, may play a role in this.

LD 2101 offers a robust solution to some of the issues with shoreland zoning laws by granting municipalities and the Land Use Planning Commission the authority to suspend or revoke permits and impose liens on properties in violation of shoreland zoning laws. I hope to never again see a small municipality be overridden by deep pocketed interests. This bill is essential to hold violators accountable and prevent the long-term damage caused by unauthorized alterations along the water's edge.

Having worked with many communities in the state, taking water quality samples, consulting on invasive species, or working on landscaping projects, I have witnessed and heard tales of the challenges that lake residents, lake associations, and municipalities encounter. Very often, who enforces these laws becomes much like a game of hot potato. Many code enforcement officers are overburdened, many lake associations go to their municipality for aid addressing a shoreland zoning violation and the municipality doesn't know how to proceed. The Land Bureau at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has too few people, with too many cases.

I have personally seen instances of new beaches being created, trees felled, and gullies on eroded hillside from a new development or homeowner doing some "renovations" or "yard work". State and municipal shoreland zoning laws exist to help protect water quality, limit erosion, conserve wildlife, and preserve the natural beauty of Maine's shoreland areas for everyone. Without the enforcement of these laws, it is as though they do not exist. I urge your support for LD 2101 to strengthen the enforcement of shoreland zoning laws, ensuring the protection of Maine's invaluable lakes and shoreland ecosystems.

Thank you for your consideration.

Most respectfully,
Tristan Taber