



**Portland Water District**  
*FROM SEBAGO LAKE TO CASCO BAY*

**TESTIMONY OF THE PORTLAND WATER DISTRICT NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST  
LD 404 – Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the  
Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council**

Chair Senator Chipman, Co-Chair Representative Williams and Members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Seth Garrison, and I am the General Manager of the Portland Water District. I provide this testimony neither for nor against LD 404.

The Portland Water District was created by the State Legislature in 1908 to provide drinking water to people in greater Portland. Today, PWD provides drinking water to over 200,000 people in 11 communities, and wastewater treatment services to six of those communities. The affairs of PWD are managed by a Board of Trustees composed of 11 members, all popularly elected by a plurality of the voters from the communities they represent.

Sebago Lake has been the water supply for greater Portland since 1869. The people of the region are fortunate to have an incredible source of drinking water. The water quality is so outstanding, it is one of about 50 (out of roughly 13,000) surface water supplies in the country that don't require filtration. Less water treatment is good for the environment and provides a big financial benefit. If Sebago Lake declines in quality and requires filtration, it would add millions in annual operations costs and require a new \$150+ million treatment facility. Filtration would increase monthly bills by about 67%. Maintaining Sebago Lake water quality helps us provide excellent quality water, affordably to customers of all income levels.

Portland Water District was fortunate to be represented on the Mountain Division Rail-Trail Council by our Environmental Services Manager, Paul Hunt. The Mountain Division Rail-Trail Council produced a report with recommendations to the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation that you are considering implementing with this legislation.

The Mountain Division rail line being proposed for trail purposes passes through very sensitive Sebago Lake watershed land along the shoreline, very close to the water intake for our treatment facility. This property has been carefully managed for over 100 years to secure the region's drinking water. The lake in this area is so sensitive that it is protected with a No Bodily Contact zone, established by a Private and Special Law passed by the Maine Legislature in 1913. Included with our testimony is a map showing the location of the existing rail corridor through the sensitive area.

The Mountain Division Rail-Trail Council stated in its recommendations that the section of the proposed trail running through this sensitive watershed land directly adjacent to the highly protected section of Sebago Lake should be relocated.

The importance of Sebago Lake water quality and this sensitive watershed area was recognized in an agreement between the Portland Water District and the Department of Transportation, which was signed in 2002. In that agreement, the Department surrendered all trail rights through this portion of the rail right-of-way in return for the conveyance of rights for the placement of a trail on other lands owned by Portland Water District. That trail has been heavily used for two decades without any adverse impact on the water supply.

The District owns wooded land that is set further back from the water that is likely suitable for the proposed trail. Our governing Board of Trustees agreed to allow a trail through this property. If and when a trail project reaches the design stage, we will work diligently with planners to find the most suitable route. This win-win solution satisfies our concerns about ensuring that Sebago Lake remains protected and our drinking water is high quality, while also providing a valuable recreational resource for the people of Maine.

We are testifying “neither for nor against” because we are in the business of providing clean drinking water, not trail advocacy. In our experience, when use and protection are balanced, Sebago Lake and its watershed lands can serve both as the water supply and as a recreational resource.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Seth Garrison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Seth Garrison,  
General Manager