



Testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

LD 184, An Act To Minimize the Propagation of Invasive Aquatic Plants

*Submitted to the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee
February 9, 2021*

Good afternoon, Chair Dill, Chair Landry, and Distinguished Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of LD 184. My name is Susan Gallo, and I am the Executive Director of Maine Lakes. Our membership organization includes more than 2,500 individual members, supporters and volunteers as well as over 80 Lake Associations. We are dedicated to our mission of promoting, protecting, and enhancing lake water quality, and of preserving the ecological, economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits of Maine's lakes for all Maine people.

We support this bill for a number of reasons which I'll outline below, but one of the most compelling reasons is the balance between the benefits we get as a result of this law versus what it costs us to implement it. **How often can you pass a bill that adds a level of protection to one of our most important publicly-owned natural resources – our lakes and ponds – with virtually no cost or inconvenience?** How can you possibly argue against asking boaters to take one easy, simple step to protect this important resource?

You could argue that enforcement is a problem. I would counter that enforcement is an issue with most of the laws relating to boats and boating in the state, simply due to the low number of wardens relative to the huge number of boaters on our lakes and ponds every day. That doesn't mean we don't consider new laws or expand existing ones. Rather, we communicate those laws to the public and trust that boaters will obey and follow them. IFW does a great job of conveying information in their rules and guides. I have complete faith that boaters who are made aware of the dangers of not draining boats after leaving a water body will absolutely comply with this new, simple, easy regulation.

There are many more reasons to argue for support of the bill:

Boaters are already required to inspect and clean vegetation off their trailers and equipment. Asking them to pull the drains at the same time is an easy step for them to take that adds another layer of invasive risk prevention.

Similar laws have been implemented, painlessly and effectively, in many other states. Our neighbors in New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York all require that drains be removed, and similar laws are in place in 11 other states in the west and midwest.

Risks of additional invasive species entering Maine are high. We are surrounded on all sides by invaders that have not yet made it into our waters. Zebra mussels, a devastating invasive that has spread widely in Lake Champlain and throughout the Great Lakes, has also reached New Brunswick. It is a species likely to travel in its tiny larval form in bilge water and in water pooling in the bottom of boats. It is critical to add a layer of risk prevention, beyond what boaters already do, for these “invisible” invaders.

The costs to control invasive species are extremely high. Maine nonprofits partner with the DEP to carry out extensive boat inspection programs throughout the state and to work with volunteers to proactively look for invasive species invasions. These programs are already at their max capacity, and funding is not adequate to meet current needs. It is imperative to take every simple step we can to eliminate further risk.

Invasive species have economic impacts. Invasive aquatic plants can harm native sport fish populations. They form dense mats that make boating, fishing, and swimming difficult. Studies have documented some invasive species can have a negative impact on property values.

Invasive species have negative ecological impacts. Invasive species change habitats and outcompete and threaten native plants and animals. Dense mat of invasive plants shade and choke out other species, and lower fish habitat quality.

Thank you for your time and attention today. For more information, please see the attached fact sheet, which was generated by a collaborative group of lake and watershed organizations. I am also happy to provide additional resources. Please contact me any time at sgallo@lakes.me.

Support LD 184: An Act to Minimize the Propagation of Invasive Aquatic Plants

Summary: Requires boats and other equipment leaving a water body be drained prior to transport

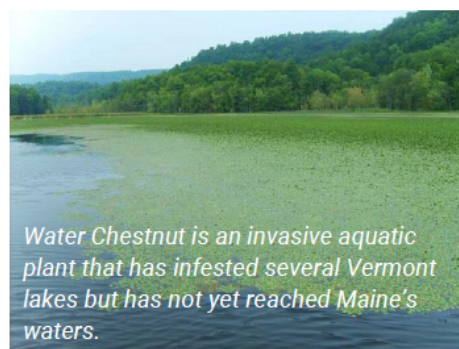
Public Hearing: Feb. 10 at 9 a.m., Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

Invasive plants harm recreational opportunities, water quality, wildlife habitat and local economies.

- Invasive aquatic plants are usually introduced into lakes and ponds when they hitchhike on boats and their associated equipment.
- Once introduced, invasive species grow and spread rapidly, outcompeting native plants, degrading habitat for fish and other wildlife, and in some cases decreasing property values.
- An aquatic invasive plant, Eurasian watermilfoil (present in 3 Maine lakes), reduced Vermont lakefront property values up to 16% and Wisconsin lakefront property values by 13% (Zhang and Boyle, 2010).

Maine has limited capacity to fight additional invasive species infestations.

- As of January 2020, more than 30 Maine lakes and rivers are infested with 6 different invasive species.
- Maine's nonprofits and lake associations bear the brunt of invasive species management and removal work. Courtesy Boat Inspection efforts are at or beyond capacity throughout the state.
- Funding from the Department of Environmental Protection supports much of these efforts but even with recent increased revenue through the Lake and River Protection Sticker, there is not enough funding to support existing prevention and control needs.
- Additional infestations pose major challenges to existing management strategies and organizational/agency capacities.



Maine has yet to deal with some of the worst aquatic invaders.

- Maine is surrounded by states with more severe invasive infestations of more and different invasive aquatic species, putting Maine's lakes at great risk for additional infestations as boats move across state lines and between water bodies.
- Draining water from motors, live wells, and bilges is a recommended practice for reducing the spread of devastating animal aquatic invaders from nearby states, including Spiny Water Flea and several species of invasive mussels that can travel in microscopic larval forms.

Maine's laws need to be stronger to reduce the risk of spread.

- While existing Maine law prohibits the transport of aquatic plants, we lag neighboring states in requiring the simple, easy, quick step of draining boats before overland transport.
- New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York (along with 12 other states) require that drain plugs be removed from boats before transport.

Complying with a new law requiring the draining of boats before transport is quick, easy, and costs nothing other than a few minutes of boaters' time. This small investment will make a big difference in reducing risks to Maine's lakes from aquatic invaders.

