



## ***Carryover/Report Back***

**LD 1342 - An Act to Increase Funding for the Prevention and Control of Invasive Aquatic Species**

**Report to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the 131<sup>st</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife**

**Provided by Inland Fisheries & Wildlife**

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The following information was compiled to help inform discussions regarding potential fee increases outlined in LD 1342 to increase investments in the prevention and management of threats posed by aquatic Invasive Species. This bill was held over to benefit from work program planning that was being undertaken by the Department and the Department of Environmental Protection. This summary provides highlights of department testimony last session, potential revenues realized from increased Lake and River Protection sticker fees, as well as new and expended state agency work program priorities to combat aquatic invasive species.

## **LD 1342 (Carryover)**

*This bill amends four existing statutes in Title 12 (§10206, sub-§3, ¶C; §13056, sub-§8, ¶A; §13056, sub-§8, ¶B; §13058, sub-§3) to increase the fees charged for the purchase of a Lake and River Protection Fund Sticker, commonly referred to as the “milfoil sticker”. The fee increase would apply to all resident and nonresident motorized watercraft, personal watercraft, and sea planes. The bill proposes a \$10 increase starting January 1, 2024 and then another \$2 increase beginning January 1, 2026 and each January 1st biennially thereafter.*

### **During Testimony the Department Testified to the Following:**

- The Department (herein MDIFW) and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (herein MDEP) work in tandem to prevent and manage statewide AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) threats; aquatic invasive plants are a focus of MDEP work programs, where MDIFW focus is invasive fish and aquatic wildlife.
- Revenues generated from the sale of “milfoil stickers” are shared between the MDIFW and MDEP for invasive aquatic species prevention and control programs, with 80% of the revenues directed to the MDEP and 20% to the MDIFW. Prior to 2014, the split was 60% MDEP and 40% MDIFW.
- By January 2024 each agency anticipated completion of an AIS budget process to inform discussions regarding increasing investments in the prevention and management of AIS threats.
- If “milfoil sticker” fees are increased, MDIFW requests that only a fixed fee be established; not the \$2 increase every other year in perpetuity as proposed. Administration of an unlimited fee increase every other year would be challenging for MDIFW to manage.

### **Projected Revenue Increases**

The proposed \$10 fixed increase in the milfoil sticker cost would result in resident boaters paying \$25 and nonresident boaters paying \$55. This increase is expected to generate about one million dollars, of which MDIFW would receive an additional \$200,000 and MDEP would receive an additional \$800,000.

Through recent budget planning, each agency identified work program priorities to support additional investments in AIS prevention and management. It was also recognized that work program priorities would be more appropriately managed through the biennial state budget process, rather than through increases in milfoil sticker fees at this time. Given the importance of protecting the state’s aquatic resources from the threats posed by AIS, the commissioners from both agencies will be exploring

initiatives in the upcoming biennial budget process (FY 2026/2027) to address AIS work program priorities more fully.

Some of the existing work program investments and new and or expanded work program priorities identified by each agency during this planning process are highlighted below.

## **MDIFW / MDEP Budget Planning**

### **MDIFW – current use of milfoil sticker revenues (20% or about \$362,664/year):**

- Personal Service costs associated with 2 Game Wardens
- Personal Service costs of associated with 1 new Aquatic Invasive Coordinator
- Purchase of milfoil stickers
- Miscellaneous lab fees, training, equipment

### **MDIFW – New/expanded priority work program needs**

The following reflects the development of an integrated work program to manage fish and aquatic wildlife threats. Four work program areas of focus include: (1) Management-monitoring-remediation, (2) Enforcement (Warden Service), (3) Information & Education, and (4) Licensing.

#### **Management/Monitoring/Remediation:**

- Enhance our Chemical Reclamation Program to eradicate invasive fish and restore the ecology of Maine waters.
- Implementation of proactive surveillance & monitoring programs for fish and wildlife threats in our most vulnerable waters.

#### **Warden Service:**

- Establishment of dedicated capacity and focus on relevant AIS enforcement and outreach

#### **Information & Education:**

- Contract annually with a marketing company or related service to develop customized marketing and outreach campaigns

#### **Licensing:**

- Support the fully burdened cost to administer sale of milfoil stickers.

### **MDEP – current use of milfoil sticker revenues (80% or about \$1,450,656/year):**

- Personal Service costs associated with 2 biologists and 2 environmental specialists.
- Grant program to fund Courtesy Boat Inspection Programs.
- Early detection of new infestations.
- Eradication of new plant infestations (where possible).

- Grant program for suppression and management of existing infestations that cannot be eradicated.

Note: Additional funding of about \$90,000 annually is available from USFWS because Maine has a USFWS-approved State Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan. Use of this funding is shared and coordinated between the MDIFW and MDEP.

**MDEP – New / expanded priority work program needs:**

- Spread prevention outreach with MDIFW including measures to promote the Clean, Drain, Dry approach to aquatic invasive species prevention.
- Expansion of the Courtesy Boat Inspection Program to fortify inspection programs on infested lakes and expand inspections to uninfested high risk lakes.
- Plant surveys on uninfested lakes with high vulnerability to infestation.
- Purchase of portable wash stations to be used in certain high-risk areas of the state, including near lakes susceptible to infestation of invasive zebra mussel.
- Establishment of regional coordinators to expand the reach of the statewide program to prevent and detect infestations.
- Funds to control existing infestations.