

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 497**

**“An Act To Prohibit the Use of Personal Watercraft on Keyes Pond and Stearns Pond in the Town of Sweden”**

**Sponsored By:** Representative MILLETT of Waterford.  
Cosponsored by: Senator Bennett of Oxford

**DATE OF HEARING: March 22, 2023**

Good afternoon Senator LaFontaine, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Lt. Jason Luce of the Maine Warden Service and speaking on behalf of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, neither for nor against to **L.D. 497**.

This bill adds Keyes Pond and Stearns Pond in the Town of Sweden in Oxford County to the list of water bodies in the State on which the operation of personal watercraft is prohibited.

Keyes Pond is approximately 1 mile long and 1/3 of a mile wide and encompasses approximately 190 acres.

A check of our records management system revealed no complaints relating to personal watercraft operation or misuse on Keyes Pond or Stearns Pond.

In 2013, one of our wardens documented an information request where someone was inquiring if there were any motorboat restrictions on the pond.

In 2019, the local warden (Warden Tim Coombs) attended a Keyes Lake Association meeting and no issues around personal watercraft operation were brought to his attention at that meeting. Warden Coombs indicated that the lake association acknowledges a “self-imposed” 10 Hp restriction on the pond which results in few larger motorized watercraft being operated on the waterbody. At one point in 2021 Warden Coombs received a complaint of a boat over 10 Hp being operated on the pond and he informed the complainant that there was no such prohibition. During the past year (2022) Warden Coombs has patrolled the pond for boating activity and has not seen a single PWC. Warden Coombs has also patrolled Stearns Pond and has indicated that he has seen a few PWC’s but has not seen them operate in violation of current laws and rules.

Camp Tapawingo on the western shore, does support summer camp activities which employ the use of a ski boat.

Title 12 Section 13071-A lists a series of waterbodies which prohibit the use of personal watercraft, there are 33 of them. Additionally, Rule Chapter 10 of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission lists additional waterbodies which prohibit the use of personal watercraft. There are approximately 270 of them.

The following is additional legislative history information:

*In 1999 L.D. 2346 was enacted which provided the legislative process for prohibiting the personal watercraft on the 33 bodies of water in Title 12. The L.D. essentially allowed for a municipality or municipalities to petition the Commissioner to restrict the operation and types of watercraft on great ponds within the municipality. If a municipality chooses to prepare recommendations for such waters, it shall take into consideration the use to which those waters are put, the depth of the water, the amount of water-borne traffic on the waters, wildlife and environmental values, noise, traditional uses of the water body and the safety of persons and property. These recommendations may be submitted only after a public hearing and must include a description of the resources the municipality or municipalities will use to enforce or assist in the enforcement of those regulations if enacted. For any municipality whose legislative body is the town meeting, recommendations may only be considered and approved during the annual town meeting held pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A, section 2525. The Commissioner was then directed to submit a report of the municipality recommendations to the appropriate Legislative session for Legislative approval.*

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.