



Connecting with Candidates about Lakes: Questions & Talking Points

Whether or not you are a Maine voter, as someone with a passion for lake protection or with property in a lake watershed, you can still participate in Maine's democracy. You can help legislative candidates learn about the many growing threats to Maine's lakes, the need for more sustained funding for critical lake conservation projects, and their role in moving lake conservation forward in Augusta.

By talking to candidates about the importance of keeping Maine's lakes healthy, you help build an informed legislature that is ready to act and protect the future of the lakes you love.

By electing leaders who care about lakes today, we ensure a brighter future for Maine's lakes tomorrow.

Now is the time to reach out to the candidates in your local races and ask them questions about the issues you care about. Pick a few of the following topics to engage your candidates in a conversation or raise other lake issues you feel passionate about. Give candidates a call and plan for a casual, informal conversation. Send them an email if you can't get them on the phone. Maybe they'll be knocking on your door this fall and you'll have a chance to ask these questions in person.

Please consider sharing what you learn about your candidates by filling out a brief survey [HERE](#).

Fill out one per candidate. Answers are anonymous and will not be shared with candidates. Please fill out the survey even if the candidates you talk to do not prioritize lake conservation. We can work to share more information about lakes with those candidates, and work with the ones who do support lake conservation on lake bills in the upcoming sessions.

Need to Find Your Candidates?

Find Your Senate Candidates [HERE](#)

Find Your House Candidates [HERE](#)

Scroll to find your district and click on the candidate's name for more information. Look for links to their campaign websites under "Contact Information" on the right side of the page

Need to find your House or Senate District number?

Look up your Senate District [HERE](#) and your House District [HERE](#)

Please forward this message to lake advocates, lake association members, or others you know who care about the health and future of Maine's lakes. Together we can elect leaders who care about lakes and ensure a brighter future for Maine's waterways.

Questions? Email Susan Gallo at sgallo@lakes.me for assistance.

NOTE: As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, Maine Lakes is strictly prohibited from advocating for parties or candidates in elections. However, we can encourage members to speak to candidates about issues that matter to them, including their interest in lake protection.

Thank you for caring about lakes and reaching out to your candidates with these important questions!

Candidate Questions:

How and why are clean and healthy lakes important to you? To your constituents? To Maine?

Talking Points:

- Maine is home to more than 5,000 lakes.
- More than 2,500 of those lakes are Great Ponds, over 10 acres in size and owned by the people of Maine.
- A recent UMaine study estimated the value of our Great Ponds to be more than \$14 billion annually.
- Our lakes provide incredible year-round recreational opportunities for thousands of residents and visitors.
- Clean and healthy lakes provide thousands of Mainers with jobs and income, either directly or indirectly.
- ***Explain to the candidate why clean and healthy lakes are important to YOU, your family, and your community.***
- ***Ask the candidate if they know what lakes are in their district, if they have a favorite lake, if they have a property near a lake, and/or if they have a business related to lakes.***
- ***Send the candidate the [Let's Be Clear](#) lake economics fact sheet.***



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Remember to share feedback from your conversations with candidates [HERE](#). Thank you!

Are you concerned about the current and future health of Maine's lakes?

Talking Points:

- While Maine has some of the healthiest lakes in the nation, our lakes are at risk as larger and more intense rain events erode soils and carry unwanted phosphorus into our lakes.
- As lake temperatures warm, and oxygen levels are depleted, our lakes lose their viability for cold water species such as salmon and trout.
- Warming water temperatures, along with more phosphorus, translates into more algae growth and sometimes hazardous "blooms". It also means both algae and invasive plants have a longer growing season.
- Climate change impacts our lakes' resiliency and puts long-term lake health at risk.
- ***Share with the candidate some examples of how the lakes in your community/district are degraded and how that has impacted you and the community.***



Algae blooms are increasing in frequency and severity in our lakes. What do you know about this problem, and what should be done about it?

Talking Points:

- Excessive algae growth, known as a bloom, turns water green, scummy, and unpleasant.
- Algae blooms feed on excess phosphorus, often a result of stormwater runoff carrying nutrient-laden soil into the lake.
- Warmer lake water creates better conditions for algae to thrive.
- Maine currently has 61 lakes at moderate to very high risk of algae blooms, with 19 of those lakes blooming almost every year.
- Some blooms are composed of Cyanobacteria which emit toxins that can make people, dogs, and wildlife sick, and can pollute public drinking water supplies.
- ***If your lake or a lake in your community has experienced algae blooms, describe to the candidate how it has impacted the lake and the community.***



Polluted stormwater runoff is degrading lake health. What do you know about this problem, and what do you think should be done about it?

Talking Points:

- Undeveloped land around a lake, with layers of vegetation and soft, absorbent soil, soaks up rain during a storm.
- The volume of stormwater runoff increases with more impermeable surfaces such as roofs, roads, and driveways.
- It also increases when trees and shrubs are removed, and when poorly planned construction exposes bare soil.
- Rainstorms are becoming more intense, sending more polluted runoff and vast amounts of sediment into lakes.
- Runoff contains nutrient pollution, which fuels the growth of plants, algae, and cyanobacteria in our lakes, leading to unhealthy blooms and reductions in water clarity.
- ***Share some of the things that homeowners can do (e.g., expand vegetated buffers, manage roof runoff with infiltration trenches, divert rain flow from driveways and paths, etc.) [Visit our Best Management Practices web page for more information.](#)***



The impact of large wakes generated too close to shore is a growing concern for lake health. Do you have ideas for regulating large wake activities on our lakes?

Talking Points:

- Large wakes erode shorelines, damage property, swamp boats, and are a safety risk for others.
- Wakeboats are a specific type of boat that generate large wakes for wake sports such as surfing and boarding, though other “traditional” boats may have after-market products added that let them generate large wakes.
- Maine has a new law that requires wake surfing to stay 300’ from shorelines, extending the “no wake zone” that already exists for all boaters within 200’ of shore, though the bill originally proposed a 500’ distance. The goal of the new law is to move wakesport activities to deeper water further from shore where their impacts to lake health is much reduced.
- ***Share any experiences you’ve had with large wakes and your ideas for how lakes can be shared among multiple users.***



Invasive plants and animals continue to be introduced and spread to more Maine lakes. What do you know about this problem, and what do you think should be done?

Talking Points:

- There are 37 waterbodies in the state infested with one or more of eight different species of invasive aquatic plants.
- Zebra mussels, a species that has devastated lakes in neighboring states, have been found just over the border in Quebec and New Brunswick.
- Once established, invasive species infestations are nearly impossible to eradicate and extremely expensive to manage. They degrade water quality and make recreation unpleasant.
- Programs like Courtesy Boat Inspections and Invasive Plant Patrollers work to slow the risk of spread and catch infestations early, but they are underfunded and need more capacity.
- Maine's Lake and River Protection Sticker fee (added to boat registrations) helps generate funds for work the state and partner non-profits do to reduce the risk of invasives spread.
- ***If you live on a lake with invasive species or are involved in managing them, share their impact on you and your community with the candidate.***



Do you think restoring and preserving the health of our lakes should be a top priority in Maine? If yes, do you have ideas about how to sustainably fund this important work?

Talking Points:

- Prioritizing the health of our lakes at all levels of government is essential or lake health will decline.
- The risks of illness to people and pets may increase as Cyanobacteria blooms become more widespread.
- Property values will decrease, an important source of revenue that will be lost to lake communities.
- Lake tourism, including the jobs that go with it, are at risk if lakes are not clean and healthy.
- Lakes over 10 acres in size are Great Ponds that belong to the people of Maine. Funding the critical work that must be done to protect this valuable public resource is desperately needed. Finding a way for general funds or other sustainable sources to fund lake conservation is essential for the long-term health of our lakes.
- ***Share with candidates your ideas about what our elected officials can do to ensure that restoring and preserving lake health becomes a priority among our elected officials.***

