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Cultural Resources

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Staff:

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Watershed Coordinator

Mariah Mitchell
Program Assistant

N.H. Lakes Management and Protection Program
N.H. Lakes Management Advisory Committee

February 5, 2019

The Honorable Clyde Carson, Chair
House Municipal and County Government Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 301
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 443 *Relative to municipal watering restrictions.*

Dear Chair Carson and Members of the Committee:

The Lakes Management Advisory Committee (LMAC) is writing to express its support for House Bill 443, which allows the local governing body to restrict the use of water for commercial outdoor watering during periods of drought.

Currently, municipalities may restrict private homeowners' discretionary use of water from public water systems and private wells for lawn irrigation during a state or federally declared drought. This allows the town to conserve limited water resources for drinking water and other essential uses. This bill would add commercial entities to those restrictions. Private homeowners and commercial entities often draw water from the same public water system or have private wells in close proximity which draw water from the same groundwater aquifer. It is therefore important that commercial entities are also required to limit lawn irrigation to ensure that water demand by all significant users can be managed equitably and effectively during droughts so that basic drinking water needs can be met.

The need for this legislation is highlighted by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services' (NHDES) Instream Flow Program. This program, in which the LMAC has been very active, is designed to ensure that water continues to flow in New Hampshire's rivers even during times of draught. One of the ways that the program accomplishes this goal is by working with municipalities to restrict outdoor water use from the river and nearby groundwater wells when river flows reach a low critical threshold. Adding commercial entities to those subject to watering restrictions will improve a town's ability to respond accurately and appropriately in the timing and stringency of the watering restrictions imposed.

The LMAC is a legislatively created body charged to work with the NHDES to administer RSA 483-A, the Lakes Management and Protection Program. The Governor and Council appointed Committee is comprised of 19 members representing academia, business, conservation organizations, lake associations, tourism, fish and game commission, marine trades, realtors, municipal government as well as several state agencies. Among its other responsibilities, the LMAC reviews legislation relevant to the Program and the state's lakes and ponds, and advises the NHDES Commissioner on the merits of such legislation.

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In conclusion, the LMAC supports HB 443 allowing the local governing body to restrict the use of water for commercial outdoor watering during periods of drought.

Should you have further questions about this testimony, please feel free to contact me at (603) 867-9299 or appliedforce52@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



David Packard
Chair

ec: Rep. Rebecca McBeath
Rep. Constance Van Houten
LMAC Representatives
Robert R. Scott, Commissioner, NHDES
Rene Pelletier, Assistant Director, Water Division, NHDES
Ted Diers, Administrator, Watershed Mgmt. Bur., NHDES
Tracie Sales, Rivers and Lakes Programs Manager, NHDES