



Legislative hearing scheduled on Sheepscot dam issue

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“This



legislation, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Pierce, (Dresden) proposes giving control of the dam on Sheepscot Pond to the Dept. of Marine Resources after decades of successful management by the Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.”

On Wednesday, February 7, at 10:00 a.m., the Maine State Legislature will hold a hearing regarding [LD 922](https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?LD=922&snum=128) [https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?LD=922&snum=128]. This legislation, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Pierce (Dresden), proposes giving control of the dam on Sheepscot Pond to the [Dept. of Marine Resources](http://www.maine.gov/dmr/) [http://www.maine.gov/dmr/] after decades of successful management by the [Dept. Of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife](https://www.maine.gov/ifw/) [https://www.maine.gov/ifw/]. It also mandates opening the dam at Sheepscot Pond to Alewives, Sea Lamprey, and other migratory anadromous fish without

regard to the historical problems of such a move. The hearing will be in Room 206 at the Burton M Cross Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta. The Sheepscot Lake Association, the Palermo Town Select Board, and a large percentage of Palermo residents oppose this legislation for several reasons including the following:

- Alewives entering Sheepscot Pond potentially carry VEN, a viral disease which would greatly sicken and negatively impact the species of fish which the rearing station stocks throughout ponds in our state. Alewives also can overload the fish rearing station requiring extra effort to manually separate and remove them on a daily basis, for which there is no budget.
- Sheepscot Pond has a rare self-sustaining population of lake trout, also known as togue. Lamprey thrive in highly oxygenated water as do the togue and other game fishes. Sheepscot's game fish will be threatened by the reintroduction of parasitic Sea Lamprey which in the past threatened the togue population and led to the present policy of excluding Sea Lamprey from entering the pond by closing the dam fishway during spawning season.
- Alewives have the capacity to decimate the togue and landlocked salmon populations in the lake due to a natural enzyme (Thiamase) in the alewife which destroys vitamin B-1 in fishes consuming alewives. That process leads to early death of those sport fish offspring.
- The opening of the dam will negatively impact water levels. As a result, these migratory fish become landlocked, as they did in the 1960s through the early 1980s. At that time, the sea lamprey were allowed back into Sheepscot. During this period there were years (similar to the previous two years of 2016-2017) when the water was too low in the pond for them to return to the sea and they "wintered over". Their population grew to such an extent as a result, which negatively impacted the game fish population. The low water levels hurt the recreational use, including swimming and boating. These low levels can decrease home values, and in turn lower tax revenue on which the Town of Palermo depends.

The Sheepscot Lake Association and the Town of Palermo oppose LD922's proposal mandating action to open the dam without regard to possible consequences. Returning these migratory fishes presents several risks which must be taken seriously. Sheepscot Pond is a significant recreational amenity for our community, town, and region. It's our home, and all the residents of Palermo deserve to be heard and represented. We urge you to attend this hearing to show your concern and to oppose passage of this bill.

This article has been updated to accurately reflect the new time of the hearing.

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