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Gail McWilliam Jellie
NH Department of
Agriculture,
Markets & Food

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NH Department of
Natural and Cultural
Resources

Staff:

Tracie Sales
Program Manager

Jen Drociak
Watershed Coordinator

Mariah Mitchell
Program Assistant

N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program

N.H. Rivers Management Advisory Committee

February 5, 2019

The Honorable Cathryn Harvey, Chair
House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 307
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 640 *An act establishing a registration fee for canoes and kayaks.*

Dear Chair Harvey and Members of the Committee:

The Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill 640, which would establish an annual registration fee for canoes and kayaks launched from public boat launches. The RMAC opposes this bill.

The concept of an annual registration fee for canoes, kayaks, and other small non-motorized vessels was discussed in the 2018 Commission to Study Creating a Boat Safe Card, which resulted from 2018 Senate Bill 410. I chaired this study commission, which heard from diverse interests. This study commission, with members supporting clean rivers and lakes as well as recreational paddling groups, did not recommend that a registration fee be placed on canoes and kayaks. Research by the commission suggested that the administrative cost of the program would be significant, and might be greater than the revenues generated from the program. The RMAC supports the conclusions made by the Commission to Study Creating a Boat Safe Card, and adds that HB 640 would be difficult to administer. For example, there is no mechanism for enforcing the program for a paddler on the Connecticut River launching from the Vermont side of the river or a tributary in Vermont. While the river is entirely within New Hampshire, the state has no authority over a boat access facility in Vermont. Similar enforcement challenges exist on other shared waterbodies, as well as determining whether a boat was launched from a public or private access facility.

The RMAC understands and supports the need to fund both boat access facilities and the lake restoration and preservation fund, but believes that a registration fee on canoes and kayaks is not an effective method to collect this revenue.

The RMAC is a legislatively created body charged to work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to administer RSA 483, the Rivers Management and Protection Program. The Governor and Council appointed Committee is comprised of members from business, agriculture, hydroelectric, municipal government, water supply, conservation, recreation, fish and game, and historical interests. Among its other responsibilities, the RMAC is charged with reviewing legislation relevant to the Program and with advising the NHDES Commissioner on the merits of such legislation.

In conclusion, the RMAC opposes HB 640 because it is an inefficient and administratively difficult method of raising money to support boat access facilities and the lake restoration and preservation fund.

Should you have any questions regarding our testimony, please feel free to contact me at 603.796.2615 or MLT@naturesource.net.

Sincerely,



Michele L. Tremblay
RMAC Chair

cc: Rep. Jeffrey Goley
RMAC 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
Local River Management Advisory Committee Chairs