

Testimony of Paul Montrone
SB 154-FN Legislative Hearing

April 12, 2011

I am Paul Montrone, representing the NH Shoreline Coalition, an association of shoreline property owners, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. We have testified at numerous hearings over the past three years, encouraging NH legislators to amend the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act.

As we have stated before, although this Act is well-intentioned, it mistakenly positions shoreline property owners as an enemy to be punished, and not the most important ally in protecting New Hampshire's precious waterways. The existing shoreland Act contains many requirements that interfere with normal family life that have little or nothing to do with water quality. It includes provisions that are impractical and virtually unenforceable, like the inability to rake leaves on your property, and burdens property owners with expensive application requirements even for small projects.

In addition, one unintended consequence of this Act has been the slowdown of legitimate maintenance and construction activity on the shorefront, costing our communities tax revenues and good jobs during a time of major recession.

Some amendments were wisely made over the past two years, and they were a move in the right direction. We congratulate the legislature and DES on this action. They did not, however, resolve most of the underlying problems with the Act. More changes were clearly required.

SB154 is an enormous step forward. It contains many positive amendments that will place the law on a solid footing that can then be supported by the thousands and thousands of shoreland owners that are the first line of defense in protecting our water quality.

In addition to making the Act more practical and useful and reducing the permitting costs for small projects, under SB 154 we are gratified to see that the penalties have been modified so that shoreland owners will not have to worry about potentially going to jail for pruning a branch of a tree or planting our flowers in the wrong place.

In brief, the NH Shoreline Coalition is pleased with and completely supportive of SB 154 as passed by the Senate, including the continuation of the permit fees to the Department of Environmental Services. We are not in favor of a repeal of the CSPA since it is important that shoreline owners understand how to best preserve the quality of our precious waterways, and an Act of this kind, with reasonable and practical regulations, can satisfy that goal.

Thank you for your attention.