

*Emailed testimony from Peggy Stevens April 28, 2025*

Dear Representatives Sheldon, Labor, and Members of the House Environment Committee,

In our testimony the other day on Lake Memphremagog, we focused on concerns about increasing cyanobacteria blooms; concerns about up to 45% of the Brown Bullhead with melanistic cancers (found nowhere else in Vermont and only ever in environmentally contaminated waters), and concerns about PFAS contamination in surface water and fish tissue.

We have prepared a PFAS Data Fact Sheet to assist your committee in understanding the critical need for a Lake in Crisis designation for the Memphremagog watershed. This designation is essential to safeguarding both the health of the lake and the well-being of surrounding communities, ecosystems, and economies that rely on clean water.

With the documented presence of PFAS, particularly PFOS, in the lake's surface water, wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) effluent, and fish tissues, any hesitation regarding the H113 designation seems unjustified. These contaminants present a clear and present threat to the watershed's integrity, and it is crucial that we take decisive action to address them.

Ignoring this growing crisis, especially when compounded by pollutants like PFAS, is not an option. Delaying action only exacerbates the problem and increases the difficulty of future remediation efforts. The H113 designation should not be viewed as a negative but as a proactive step forward—a clear commitment to confronting this issue head-on and showing the public that we are taking action to protect our lake, its surrounding environment, and the people, fish, wildlife, and economies that depend on it.

Waiting until contamination reaches irreversible levels would condemn future generations to an unthinkable fate. If the lake provides drinking water to over 175,000 Quebec residents, it stands to reason that protecting this vital drinking water reservoir is not just necessary—it's imperative. If the waters of Lake Memphremagog instead flowed from north to south, we would expect Quebec to

demonstrate the same concern and take similar measures to protect the watershed from contamination. Now is the time for us to act decisively to prevent future PFAS accumulation, which is persistent and difficult, if not impossible, to reverse.

During her testimony to your committee, Johanne Lavoie, volunteer President of Memphremagog Conservation Inc., highlighted the closure of the landfill in the Memphremagog watershed in Magog in 2010. Since then, leachate from the landfill has been shipped out of the watershed to protect water quality. In that same spirit, I proposed in my testimony that Vermont take reciprocal action—close the landfill in Coventry and ship the leachate out of the watershed.

A first important step would be to secure the final destination of the Coventry landfill's leachate outside the Memphremagog watershed, as was requested and voted on by the Assemblée Nationale du Québec in 2021. This move would not only help protect our water but also align with Vermont's Environmental Justice Law (Act 154). Sending the leachate outside the watershed would serve as a clear recognition of Vermont's commitment to Act 154, demonstrating respect for the health and environmental rights of marginalized communities and ensuring that all Vermonters and Quebec neighbors have equitable access to clean water and air. This action would be an easy, no-cost step that would show Vermont's dedication to the Lake in Crisis Action Plan and demonstrate proactive mitigation of one significant component of water quality degradation.

By passing H.113, Vermont would be making the perfect acknowledgment of Act 154—affirming that the state is dedicated to environmental justice, particularly in ensuring that vulnerable communities have access to clean, safe water. It is a proactive step that will protect the Memphremagog watershed, a vital resource for future generations.

We have attached additional documents to support the passage of H113 for your consideration. Additionally, I am providing the link to our April 24, 2025 testimony. While we were able to present testimony in a very short time frame, we do not yet have a complete transcript of our remarks. Please let me know if the provided link is sufficient or if you would prefer us to compile a more formal document of our testimony.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwtSPcd7\\_yQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwtSPcd7_yQ)

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing these materials. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Peggy Stevens

Johanne Lavoie

John Barrows

Polly Jones