

# OPPOSE

## **LD 269 – An Act to Provide Increased Opportunities on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway**

**Sponsor:** Senator Troy JACKSON of Aroostook.

**Co-Sponsors:** Senators PATRICK of Oxford, SHERMAN of Aroostook and Representatives CRAY of Palmyra, JONES of Freedom, MAREAN of Hollis, and SAUCIER of Presque Isle.

**Summary:** This bill would abolish the current rule, which limits groups on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway to 12 members. It would allow groups of up to 24, and provides the opportunity for groups larger than 24 by permission of the Director of the Division of Parks and Public Lands.

**Explanation:** The current 12-person group size limit is designed to protect the wilderness experience on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. It has been in place since 1974. (Four organizations have “grandfathered” rights for larger (16 or 18 members) groups. Those organizations were using the Allagash before the Waterway was established in 1966.)

The size limit was established because groups larger than 12 are noisier and can degrade the wilderness experience of other users of the Waterway, both on and off the water.

Campsites along the Allagash are not designed to accommodate groups of 24, which means that vegetation would be trampled by large groups trying to find tent sites. Many campsites on the Allagash are designed for use by more than one party at a time. Camping in a two- or three-person site alongside a group of 24 would not be a wilderness experience.

The newest Allagash Wilderness Waterway Management Plan, adopted in 2012 with broad support, specifically retains the 12-person group size limit (Strategy 1.10.A.).

Groups larger than 12 currently are allowed to paddle the Allagash; they simply have to divide into two groups of less than 12, paddle separately, and stay in separate campsites.

The national trend is to lower the size of groups allowed in remote recreation destinations in order to enhance the wilderness experience. For example, groups in the Adirondacks are limited to eight in some sensitive areas, and groups in the White Mountain National Forest are limited to ten in certain areas. LD 269 would move in the opposite direction, degrading the experience that is the reason why people around the world travel to Maine to paddle the Allagash.

**NRCM Opposes LD 269.**