

VOTING MEMBERS:

Michele L. Tremblay
Chair
Conservation
Community

Larry T. Spencer
Vice Chair
Conservation
Commissions

Victoria Bunker
Historic/Archeological
Interests

Christopher Hodgdon
NH Fish & Game
Commission

Frederick J. McNeill
Municipal Officer

Madeleine Mineau
Granite State
Hydropower Assoc.

Robert M. Roseen
Recreational Interests

Ruth Ward
Local River Management
Advisory Committees

Donald L. Ware
Public Water Suppliers

Vacant
Agricultural Community

Vacant
Business & Industry
Association

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

Peter Bowman
NH Dept. of Natural and
Cultural Resources

Brian Eaton
NH Department of
Safety

Jennifer Gilbert
NH Dept. of Business
and Economic Affairs

Mark Hemmerlein
NH Department of
Transportation

Shawn Jasper
NH Dept. of Agriculture,
Markets & Food

John Magee
NH Fish & Game
Department

STAFF:

Tracie Sales
Program Administrator

Nisa Marks
Program Assistant

Vacant
Watershed Coordinator

NH Rivers Management Advisory Committee

NH Rivers Management and Protection Program

April 13, 2022

The Honorable Edward Gordon, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 208
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 344 *An act relative to the electronic participation requirements of meetings open to the public under the right to know law.*

Dear Chair Gordon and Members of the Committee,

The Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) is writing to express its **support of Senate Bill 344**, which allows municipalities to authorize municipal public bodies to meet virtually when less than a quorum is physically present.

The RMAC supports this bill, both in its original text and as amended by the Senate, because

- Our experience was that remote meetings during the pandemic increased attendance and participation at public meetings;
- The state's local river management advisory committees and other state and municipal groups have reported similar experiences; and
- Current technology allows bodies to conduct meetings effectively and efficiently in a remote setting.

The original text of the bill would have applied to a variety of groups that are not covered by the Senate amendment, and which the RMAC would like to see included. Several of the local advisory committees for the nineteen designated rivers in the state have difficulty meeting quorum requirements or have lost members who are unable to drive an hour or more to meetings. LACs members are nominated by their towns and cities to provide local input in state permit decisions.

Many volunteers are older citizens. There are other volunteers who live far from meeting locations or are not able to drive at night or in bad weather. For them, having a remote attendance option that could apply to all public bodies in the state would allow greater participation in New Hampshire's culture of volunteer-based civic engagement. **These volunteers should be counted towards a quorum so that these boards, committees, and commissions can conduct their statutory business.**

The RMAC is a legislatively created body charged to work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to administer RSA 483, the Rivers Management and Protection Program. The Governor and Council appointed Committee is composed of members from business, agriculture,

hydroelectric, municipal government, water supply, conservation, recreation, fish and game, and historical interests.

Should you have any questions regarding our testimony in support of SB 344, feel free to contact me at 603.796.2615 or MLT@naturesource.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michele L. Tremblay".

Michele L. Tremblay, Chair

cc: Senators Daniels, Hennessey, Cavanaugh, and Perkins Kwoka
Representatives Long, Eaton, and Egan
RMAC Representatives
Robert R. Scott, Commissioner, NHDES
Ted Diers, Administrator, Watershed Management Bureau, NHDES
Tracie Sales, Rivers and Lakes Program Administrator, NHDES
Local River Management Advisory Committee Chairs