

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Joshua Schauer 271-3077

SB 598, establishing the cyanobacteria mitigation loan and grant fund task force.

Hearing Date: February 10, 2026

Time Opened: 10:21 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:36 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avard, Pearl, McConkey, Watters and Rosenwald

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes the cyanobacteria mitigation loan and grant fund task force.

Sponsors:

Sen. McConkey
Rep. Peternel
Rep. Crawford

Sen. Watters
Rep. J. MacDonald

Sen. Lang
Rep. Taylor

Who supports the bill: 179 Individual signed in support of this legislation. Please contact Joshua.schauer@gc.nh.gov for more information.

Who is neutral on the bill: 1 Individual signed neutral on this legislation. Please contact Joshua.schauer@gc.nh.gov for more information.

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator Mark McConkey, District 3

- Senator McConkey introduced the bill and explained that it will establish a cyanobacteria mitigation loan program and a taskforce to address the issue.
- He explained that American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have been exhausted, making new funding necessary, and highlighted that cyanobacteria poses serious risks to both residents and the local ecology.
- While past attempts to fund mitigation have been made, he emphasized the need for a more sustainable and reliable funding mechanism.
- The taskforce will be responsible for developing this sustainable funding strategy and guiding ongoing mitigation efforts, which are especially important for his district.

Senator Rosenwald asked whether the bill could be amended to have only one senator on the taskforce instead of two. She also inquired whether the taskforce would automatically come to an end after completing its work or if it would need to be repealed.

Senator McConkey responded that he was amenable to adding a sunset provision for the taskforce and he was open to taking it down to one senator.

Jodi Grimblas, NH trade association.

- They expressed strong support for the bill, stating that it would be beneficial for New Hampshire and serve the state's environmental and public health interests.

Amy Smagula, Chief Aquatic Biologist at DES

- Mr. Smagula said that the agency monitors the waters and carries out the on-the-ground work related to cyanobacteria mitigation.
- DES took no formal position on the bill but stated they were available to answer questions regarding cyanobacteria and current mitigation efforts.
- She explained that only \$200,000 remains available in funding, while each mitigation project costs approximately \$200,000 to \$500,000.
- They expressed hope that the proposed taskforce would develop a multi-faceted and sustainable funding approach.
- She emphasized the need to support ongoing cleanup efforts, noting that many projects are currently in the queue awaiting funding.

Senator Avard asked if it was critical to the tourism industry.

Ms. Smagula responded that yes, it is critical to the tourism industry, but she also emphasized that cyanobacteria affects recreation more broadly, impacts drinking water supplies, and poses health risks to both people and animals.

Senator Watters asked about the 16 water bodies currently affected across the state and noted that as temperatures continue to rise, it is likely that more water bodies will experience cyanobacteria blooms in the future.

Ms. Smagula answered that yes, as temperatures rise, cyanobacteria blooms become more likely. She added that there are a multitude of contributing factors, including warming waters, nutrient runoff, and other environmental conditions that create favorable circumstances for bloom development.

Senator Watters commented that it is part of the natural environment, noting that natural processes, including the release and cycling of nutrients such as potassium and other elements, can contribute growth.

Ms. Smagula responded that land use practices are contributing to the increase in blooms. She explained that aging septic systems, fertilizer runoff, and other sources of nutrient pollution accumulate over time and create these conditions that promote

cyanobacteria growth. She noted that mitigation efforts examine both the lake and the broader watershed however funding has taken a holistic approach in regards remediation efforts.

Senator Watters mentioned that many issues regarding drainage and erosion have been identified. However, He asked if DOT and DES were continuously addressing these as part of their routine maintenance work.

Ms. Smagula said that is correct but they do have a number of partnerships with state agencies as well as municipalities and lake associations so that they can share information for storm water management and best practices of the landscape in and around the water.

Senator Watters said he appreciated the bill and how effectively it leveraged all the stakeholders involved in addressing the problem. He noted that there had been \$2 million initially, and with the remaining funds, only a couple hundred thousand were left. He asked what the future needs would be and how much funding they would require.

Ms. Smagula said that if she had to put a number on it, it would be about 1–2 million a year. She added that their recent projects had been around 500,000 each.

Andrea LaMoreaux , NH Lakes Association.

Ms. LaMoreaux said she was in support of the bill. She echoed Senator McConkeys testimony that there is an immediate need for this bill to pass.

She suggested to the committee that on Line 17 of the bill, the makeup of the task force be changed from “or” to “and” regarding the lakes and rivers associations. Instead of having only one representative for both, there could be two separate representatives; one from each.

Senator McConkey asked for clarification and if she wanted there to be two separate representatives

Ms. LaMoreaux said yes.

Senator McConkey said he didn’t want too many people and was concerned about meeting a quorum with such a short time. He was under the impression that both organizations worked together hand-in-hand.

Ms. LaMoreaux said it was up to the committee to make that decision.