

Environmental group sues Maine regulators over water quality ratings on Androscoggin River

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Susan Sharon

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People gather overlooking the Androscoggin River in Lewiston, Maine, in 2022

An environmental group is suing the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for failing to upgrade water quality classifications on a part of the Androscoggin River.

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay said water samples show conditions from the base of Gulf Island Pond to the Worumbo Dam have improved, but state regulators haven't upgraded the classification rating to reflect the real quality of the water.

The "upper lower" segment of the river currently has a class C rating.

"The results were really, really clear," said Ed Friedman, the nonprofit's chairman. "We were meeting class B 100% of the time, so the laws should reflect that."

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Maine, alleges that the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has refused to recommend an upgrade, in violation of the Clean Water Act.

And Friedman said accurate classifications prevent the river from backsliding.

"People up there really want a live and healthy river, because they understand it will help their economies," he said. "People want to move there; people want to do business there. It will be a place to celebrate, as opposed to a dingy mill town."

The group is also suing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for failing to hold the state of Maine accountable to provisions in the Clean Water Act.

A spokesperson for the Maine DEP said the department does not comment on pending litigation.