



The Friends of the Clammers
PO Box 26
Freeport, ME 04032

Feb. 25, 2015

To: Sen. Linda Baker, Rep. Walter Kumiega, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources

From: Chad Coffin, Friends of the Clammers

RE: Support of LD 255

My name is Chad Coffin. I'm the president of the Friends of the Clammers, owner of Stewards of the Sea LLC, and a life long fisherman of Casco Bay. I am here to testify before you today in support of LD 255, "An Act to Preserve the Integrity of Maine's Shellfish Industry by Increasing the Penalty for Interfering with Permitted Harvest".

LD 255 is a solid first-step in sustaining locally controlled municipal shellfish resources that have and continue to experience dramatic declines. This bill will strengthen Maine's efforts to encourage responsible stewardship of its marine resources by giving municipal leaseholders the protections needed to invest in cultivating marine organisms in intertidal areas. This legislation merely extends the same protections to holders of municipal aquaculture permits that the state provides to its other leaseholders.

The legislation also has added ecological benefits, as cultivated shellfish will release seed into the water column that can help enhance severely depleted wild stocks of shellfish and the numerous marine species that rely on them. It is also well known that shellfish are important filter feeders, whose presence enhances water quality.

If the legislation receives the support it needs to move ahead, I would respectfully offer ~~amendments~~ two amendments to the language. First, allow the leaseholder to designate people, such as employees or interns, to engage in activities on the lease site relating to the cultivation and harvesting of marine organisms. Second, bring the penalties for interference or destruction of cultivated marine organisms on the lease site to match the actual worth of the destruction causes. For example, if someone steals \$12,000 worth of shellfish from a lease site, the penalty needs to include restitution of the actual loss.

Thank you for your time.