



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: (207) 287-4469

Brian L. Hubbell

66 Park Street

Bar Harbor, ME 04609

Residence: (207) 288-3947

Brian.Hubbell@legislature.maine.gov

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Testimony of Rep. Brian Hubbell

LD 405: An Act To Support Expanded Capacity for Breeding Wild Atlantic Salmon in Downeast Rivers

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources

Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, I am Brian Hubbell. I represent House District 135, Bar Harbor, Mount Desert, and Lamoine, and I am here this afternoon to present **LD 405: An Act To Support Expanded Capacity for Breeding Wild Atlantic Salmon in Downeast Rivers.**

As this committee understands, Atlantic salmon represent a natural resource which, in generations past, were distinctively important to our state -- especially to our downeast rivers, each of which imprinted their own strain of salmon smolts hatched in their water.

Unfortunately, over the course of the last century, as a consequence of a combination of overfishing, pollution, habitat loss, waterway obstruction, and poor marine survival, North American salmon stocks have been severely depleted and Maine rivers are now the only remaining habitat for the western strains of Atlantic salmon.

For the past 20 years, I've followed the work of the Downeast Salmon Federation with admiration as they've tenaciously pursued their mission of conserving wild salmon and its habitat. This is a lean, locally-directed organization that has had extraordinary success realizing this vision on a shoestring budget and by leveraging goodwill -- including a \$25,000 grant this past year from Governor LePage's contingency fund.

In particular, I have been impressed by the Federation's new East Machias Aquatic Research Center which -- building on interest from Iceland's North Atlantic Salmon Fund -- shows real success in rearing Atlantic salmon using the methods recently proven out by biologist Peter Gray with the successful restoration of Atlantic salmon in the River Tyne in the north of England.

With the mounting evidence of their success in restoring vigorous native strain of young salmon in the difficult watershed of the East Machias River, the Federation would now

like to prove the applicability of this method on other downeast rivers. Their immediate aim is to replicate a similar facility on the Narraguagus River. This habitat promises significant returns both in terms of salmon stock, scientific knowledge, and long-term economic benefit to the downeast region.

In order to allow the committee the greatest freedom to take this proposal as far as it wishes, I am offering this bill as a concept draft.

But those testifying after me will flesh out some more concrete suggestions. These individuals are deeply knowledgeable and experienced. I'll just ask the committee to take advantage of their knowledge and experience as a resource and to direct all technical questions toward them.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any general questions.