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An Act To Clarify the Licensing Requirements for Aquaculturists and Allow for the Appropriate Handling of Bycatch from Aquaculture Lease Sites

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §6073-A, as amended by PL 2005, c. 92, §6, is further amended to read:

§ 6073-A. Season and minimum size exemption; aquaculture

The holder of a lease issued under section 6072, 6072-A or 6072-B or a license issued under section 6072-C is exempt from any requirement regarding the time of taking or possessing, minimum or maximum length or other minimum or maximum size requirement for any marine organism cultivated on the leased area. The exemption applies only to those organisms actually cultivated on the leased area, except that upon harvest of finfish from the leased area pursuant to an aquaculture lease, any finfish of a species that was not cultivated on the leased area but occurred in the enclosure must also be harvested and retained for appropriate disposal by the holder of a lease. Such finfish may not be sold and may not be released or disposed of into the waters of the State and must be reported to the department at the same time as reports of the harvest are filed. The commissioner shall require a system of identification of organisms exempted under this section.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §6073-B is enacted to read:

§ 6073-B. Harvester license exemption; aquaculture

The holder of a lease issued under section 6072, 6072-A or 6072-B or a license issued under section 6072-C is exempt from any requirement under sections 6421, 6501, 6748, 6748-A, 6748-C, 6748-D, 6751, 6803 and 6811 to hold a separate license for the removal, possession, transport or sale of the cultured organisms, except for molluscan bivalve shellfish, from the leased area or the licensed gear.

Sec. 3. 12 MRSA §6601, sub-§2-A is enacted to read:

2-A. Licensed activities; aquaculture. The holder of a commercial shellfish license who is also the holder or authorized representative of a holder of a lease issued under section 6072, 6072-A or 6072-B or a license issued under section 6072-C and personnel who are operating under the authority of such a holder of a commercial shellfish license may remove, possess, transport within the state limits or sell cultured shellfish the holder has removed from the leased area or the licensed gear to a wholesale seafood license holder certified under section 6856. Such a holder of a commercial shellfish license may also sell such shellstock from that license holder's home in the retail trade. The department shall establish by rule a means to identify personnel operating under the authority of such a license holder. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 4. 12 MRSA §6745, sub-§2-A is enacted to read:

2-A. Licensed activities; aquaculture. The holder of a hand-raking mussel license who is also the holder or authorized representative of a holder of a lease issued under section 6072, 6072-A or 6072-B or a license issued under section 6072-C and personnel who are operating under the authority of such a holder of a hand-raking mussel license may remove, possess, transport within the state limits or sell cultured mussels the holder has removed from the leased area or the licensed gear to a wholesale seafood license holder certified under section 6856. Such a holder of a hand-raking mussel license may also sell such mussels from that license holder's home in the retail trade. The department shall establish by rule a means to identify personnel operating under the authority of such a license holder. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 5. 12 MRSA §6746, sub-§2-A is enacted to read:

2-A. Licensed activities; aquaculture. The holder of a mussel boat license who is also the holder or authorized representative of a holder of a lease issued under section 6072, 6072-A or 6072-B or a license issued under section 6072-C and personnel who are operating under the authority of such a holder of a mussel boat license may remove, possess, transport within the state limits or sell cultured mussels the holder has removed from the leased area to a wholesale seafood license holder certified under section 6856. Such a holder of a mussel boat license may also sell such mussels from that license holder's home in the retail trade. The department shall establish by rule a means to identify personnel operating under the authority of such a license holder. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

This bill provides that fish that cohabitated with farmed fish in an area leased for aquaculture must be harvested and returned for appropriate disposal by the lease holder.

It also provides that the holder of an aquaculture lease is not required to hold a separate license for the removal, possession, transport or sale of certain cultured organisms from the area leased for aquaculture or licensed gear.

It establishes that commercial shellfish license holders, mussel hand-raking license holders and mussel boat license holders may use these licenses to remove, possess, transport and sell cultured shellfish they have removed from an area they lease for aquaculture.