



Town of Searsport, Maine

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Testimony in opposition to LD 1287

An Act To Protect the Penobscot River and Penobscot Bay from Mercury Contamination

Town Manager James S. Gillway

Good Afternoon, I thank the committee chairs Senator Carson, Representative Tucker and honorable members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee for the opportunity to present testimony on LD 1287. I am the former State Representative for District 98 and the current Town Manager for the Town of Searsport.

The Town of Searsport abuts the watershed effected by this piece of legislation. Although I certainly applaude the goals of containing the mercury in the river that this bill aims at, I do not think it will even come close to achieving them. Instead it will hinder the efforts to clean the watershed and create unintended consequences for the future. There are many potential projects that depend on the ability to dredge including underwater cabling. I believe if additional cabling is required for high speed internet or power to Isleboro it would be impacted. There is also cabling required for Off Shore wind. Any expansions of mooring fields that require dredging would be impacted as well as any expansion for wastewater facilities or for new businesses.

I have been involved in the process for permitting dredging in my tenure as manager. I want to personally attest to the fact that it is not easy. The Army Corps of Engineers has a very high standard and the process is very thorough, requiring sampling of materials to be dredged for contamination. Such tests will determine how matererials are to be dealt with.

I think that the limitations being propped in this bill will actually impeded the efforts to clean the area affected. Any dredge that is proposed in the area mentioned in the bill will likely require a removal of spoils to a suitable upland location. This process will potentially remove contaminates from the watershed. I would also like to mention that one of the ways the industry protects the environment is to dredge and bury contaminates under the sea bottom. This is the process that was used to clean Boston Harbor. It was not done to hide the problem but to clean the harbor environment immediately, basically storing the contaminates safely for the future when proper removal and cleaning can possibly occur. Boston Harbor went from one of the most polluted to one of the cleanest with this method. It should be one of the options considered in the Penobscot. This bill will would make it harder to achive a cleaner sea floor.

I urge the committee to reject this bill. The summary provided in the bill is not accurate. It is a prohibition to any dredging that is not necessary for maintenance of navigation.