

MAINE AUDUBON TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF LD 493, AN ACT TO CREATE THE
OCEAN ACIDIFICATION COUNCIL
BEFORE THE MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, and members of the Marine Resources Committee. My name is Jenn Gray and I represent Maine Audubon and our 20,000 members and supporters in favor of LD 493, An Act to Create the Ocean Acidification Council.

LD 493 establishes the Ocean Acidification Council to identify, study, prevent, remediate and mitigate the direct and indirect effects of coastal and ocean acidification on species that are commercially harvested and grown in the State's coastal and ocean environments.

Changes to marine currents and temperatures are affecting movement patterns of fish and other wildlife. In addition, a recent Woods Hole study found abnormally acidic waters along the bottom of the Gulf of Maine. Scientific data suggests that the Gulf of Maine is vulnerable to ocean acidification caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide. Such acidification puts at risk shellfish, marine invertebrates, and perhaps other fish.

The draft report of the Commission to Study the Effects of Coastal and Ocean Acidification and Its Existing and Potential Effects on Species that are Commercially Harvested and Grown Along the Maine Coast found that ocean acidification is occurring and having harmful effects on the marine ecosystem, "While Maine's marine environment is a complex ecosystem and there is much we don't know about ocean acidification, existing scientific data shows that by far, the greatest contributor of open ocean acidification is atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂), and that nutrient and CO₂ runoff from land-based point and nonpoint sources are additional drivers of acidification in Maine's estuary and near shore waters. That data also indicates that the increasing rate of acidification will most heavily impact those marine organisms that produce calcium carbonate hard parts, such as clams, lobster, shrimp and cold water coral" (Pages i and ii)

The commission recommended the creation of an ongoing ocean acidification council to help achieve its goals and implement its recommendations. According to the report, the council would help with the following:

- A. Establish partnerships with state agencies involved with ocean acidification matters;
- B. Coordinate the implementation of the commission's recommendations with other ocean and coastal actions;
- C. Incorporate refinements and updates to the recommendations according to the latest science on ocean acidification;
- D. Bridge ocean acidification-related science and policy needs by supporting continued productive interaction between scientists and policymakers;

E. Coordinate with key federal agencies, including the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of the Interior, and work within the framework of the National Ocean Policy, and with the National Ocean Council, the Northeast Regional Planning Body, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council and the Northeast Coastal Acidification Network, while sharing data with the Northeast Ocean Data Portal. This can be done by developing memoranda of understanding or other mechanisms among partners to support data sharing, collaboration, and leveraging and prioritizing of funding;

F. Identify and promote economic development opportunities afforded by ocean acidification through development and commercialization of new technologies and businesses; and

G. Build public awareness, support and engagement to advance public understanding of the importance of a healthy ocean and of the most pressing challenges facing the ocean, and to engage citizens and various stakeholders in the development of and support for actions and solutions needed to address those challenges.

The Council would play an important role and serve a very important function. We urge the Committee to support LD 493. Thank you for your consideration.