



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



PAUL R. LEPAGE
GOVERNOR

PATRICIA W. AHO
COMMISSIONER

March 11, 2015

Senator Linda Baker, Chair
Representative Walter Kumiega, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
State Office Building Room 206
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 493, An Act to Create the Ocean Acidification Council

Dear Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, and Members of the Committee:

While issues related to ocean acidification are important to the Department, for the reasons set forth below, we respectfully submit this letter in opposition to LD 493, An Act to Create the Ocean Acidification Council.

The proposed Ocean Acidification Council will require significant Departmental resources and time which will take away from other important environmental programs. Last year the Department utilized approximately 200 hours of staff time to support the legislative Ocean Acidification Commission from August through December 2014. Without additional funding or resources, enactment of LD 493 will put a significant burden on the Department for managing existing programs while participating in this Council. We would ask the Committee to be mindful of state resources and consider whether this new Council is the most efficient and best way to continue work on this important issue.

I'd like to take a moment to briefly explain the Department's role with regard to this topic. Ocean acidification is related to atmospheric carbon dioxide, and the Department has several programs that are helping to reduce the level of CO₂ in the air. Participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, vehicle emissions standards, reductions in demand for heating fuel through weatherization programs, and high efficiency electrical appliances all help to reduce the amount of atmospheric CO₂ being produced. DEP also has programs to help landowners with reducing runoff to the ocean, which reduces the buildup of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus that contribute to acidification, and we also collect, correlate and analyze data regarding these nutrients in rivers, bays, and other waters of the state. DEP permitting for projects that impact the ocean includes requirements to maintain existing vegetation like eelgrass, which removes CO₂ from the water and thereby helps reduce acidification. The Department participates in workshops and other collaborative forums to stay abreast of new research and scientific developments in the field. These are just a few of the ongoing efforts the Department has in this area.

AUGUSTA
17 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0017
(207) 287-7688 FAX: (207) 287-7826

BANGOR
106 HOGAN ROAD, SUITE 6
BANGOR, MAINE 04401
(207) 941-4570 FAX: (207) 941-4584

PORTLAND
312 CANCO ROAD
PORTLAND, MAINE 04103
(207) 822-6300 FAX: (207) 822-6303

PRESQUE ISLE
1235 CENTRAL DRIVE, SKYWAY PARK
PRESQUE ISLE, MAINE 04769
(207) 764-0477 FAX: (207) 760-3143

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Establishment of an Ocean Acidification Council is unnecessary to carry out the goals of the bill and is duplicative of existing efforts underway pertaining to climate change and adaptation. The Department's report of the recommendations of the Environmental and Energy Resources Working Group, released in September of 2014, lists dozens of ongoing programs that Maine is engaged in to address climate change, including monitoring of numerous economically important marine species such as lobster, clams, scallops and shrimp, as well as monitoring the chemical composition of the water itself; mapping the results to identify and follow geographic changes in distribution and other trends; modeling the observed patterns of changes to help predict the impact and extent of future changes; and developing strategies to mitigate these effects. Since the issues of climate change and ocean acidification are inextricably linked, we think it will be more efficient to consider this issue in the broader context of climate change and adaptation programs.

If the Committee has any questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact Susanne Miller (941-4190) at the Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Parent For". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Patricia W. Aho
Commissioner

Cc: Susanne Miller, Director Eastern Maine Regional Office, DEP