Bigelow | Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

Testimony of Meredith M. White, PhD
In support of *LD 493, An Act to Create the Ocean Acidification Coordinating Council (OACC)*

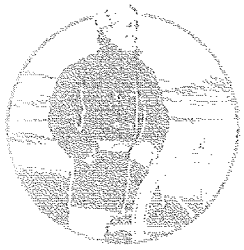
11 March 2015

While I could not be present today, I want to voice my support for *LD 493, An Act to Create the Ocean Acidification Coordinating Council (OACC)*. I am Dr. Meredith White and I work as a postdoctoral research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay, Maine. I received my PhD in biological oceanography in February 2013 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology/Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution Joint Program. My research has focused on the effects of ocean acidification on marine organisms, including larval scallops and a type of phytoplankton called coccolithophores. I also served as a member of the Maine Ocean Acidification Commission, which released its report, including recommendations for Maine and a State of the Science Summary, in February.

The Maine Ocean Acidification Commission unanimously suggested 25 recommendations by which Maine can further understand how ocean acidification affects our waters and how to mitigate and remediate those impacts. The membership diversity of the Commission was critical to its success, and also speaks to the strength of our unanimous votes. *LD 493* represents the only recommendation included in the report with accompanying legislation. The Commission recognized that without an ongoing Ocean Acidification Coordinating Council with a similar make up to the original Ocean Acidification Commission, the state would have difficulties maintaining a focus on progress in the field of ocean acidification research and mitigation, as well as on implementation of the recommendations.

Maine has made history by being the first East Coast state to establish an Ocean Acidification Commission, but it is absolutely essential that there be an on-going OACC. Many of the findings of the Ocean Acidification Commission focused on how much we don't know about how ocean acidification affects Maine and its coastal organisms. This is a rapidly-progressing field and Maine needs an on-going body to bring together scientists, legislators, state agencies, fishermen, and aquaculturists. Without the OACC established by *LD 493*, Maine will lose its momentum on mitigating the impacts of ocean acidification in our state.

Ocean acidification is one of the biggest ocean challenges that we will face in coming years. The vast majority of experimental data show negative effects of ocean acidification on marine organisms, particularly calcifying organisms including clams, scallops, oysters, and mussels. Maine has an important economic link to the health of the coastal marine ecosystem and could be affected in deleterious ways if no further action is taken. Many of the commercially important species in Maine live in coastal and estuarine regions, which are particularly vulnerable to acidification. While ocean acidification is a global problem, it is one that is best acted on at a local level. We really can make a difference in the acidification of our coastal waters, both through a better understanding of what we are putting into our waters and by remediation strategies.



207 315-2567 | bigelow.org | 60 Bigelow Drive | PO Box 380 | East Boothbay, ME 04544

Supporting *LD 493* is critical to ensure that Maine maintains a coordinated focus on understanding and mitigating the impacts of ocean acidification in our state. I strongly urge the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources to support bill *LD 493*, and I thank them for their time.

Sincerely,

Meredith M. White, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Scientist
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences
mwhite@bigelow.org
207-315-2567 x520