



AGC MAINE

THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

March 16, 2023

Senator Reny
Representative Hepler
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
100 State House Station Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: AGC Maine in Opposition to LD 586, *“An Act to Protect Maine Fisheries from the Effects of Industrial Recirculating Aquaculture Operations”*

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler, and Distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Matt Marks, and I am a Principal at Cornerstone Government Affairs. I’m submitting comments on behalf of my client Associated General Contractors of Maine (AGC Maine).

The advancement of regulated aquaculture in Maine provides opportunities for Maine residents and sustains or adds construction careers during the initial phase of development and ongoing operations. NOAA reported in 2020 that aquaculture supports sustainable earth citing the assimilation with the United Nations’ seventeen points for sustainability goals. In the NOAA publication¹, it states “Although oceans cover 70 percent of the Earth, they account for less than 2 percent of human food production. Luckily, the number of sustainable aquaculture farms continues to increase to meet the demands of our growing population,” and “Aquaculture creates year-round jobs, supports resilient working waterfronts and coastal communities, and can provide sustainable economic growth. Across the United States, aquaculture production is valued at \$1.5 billion.”

AGC Maine represented the construction industry on the Maine Climate Council and is pleased the Council adopted provisions that recognized both the economic and environmental benefits of aquaculture. In the December 2020 report, “Maine Won’t Wait” aquaculture is specifically addressed within the document as an opportunity for Maine even citing, “State support for the growing aquaculture sector can serve to increase Maine seafood production, provide important economic opportunities for coastal communities...”

Both state and federal regulators are well equipped under the current permitting process to ensure compliance with environmental standards. The continued resistance to economic development that creates benefits for food resources in a regulated economy places reliance on countries like China where they produce about 2/3 of the market. In Maine, new laws became effective in September 2021 for licensing and leasing statutes and our process is both extensive and public-facing.

The need for US and World food production continues to outpace production. The World Economic Forum stated that production must grow 60% over the next few decades to meet the demand. Maine can be positioned as a leader in aquaculture and ensure we continue to balance our environmental goals.

We urge Maine’s legislature to embrace sustainable aquaculture for our economic and environmental priorities and vote no on LD 586.

¹ NOAA Fisheries September 2020: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/aquaculture-supports-sustainable-earth>
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