

Andy Spalding
Freeport
LD 508

Good afternoon, Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich - and the members of the joint standing committee on the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

My Name is Andy Spalding and I writing this testimony for your consideration as I am away this week from Maine. I am a lobsterman from Freeport, and I support the passage of LD 508 and here is why -

I come from the point of a commercial lobster fisherman, as well as multigenerational islander, harbor master, and holder of a Bachelors Degree in Human Ecology from the College of the Atlantic, I strongly oppose any fin fish aquaculture operations off the coast of Maine.

The Maine lobster industry in recent years has been inundated new federal regulations aimed at protecting the North Atlantic right whale. The claim from the federal regulators is that the Gulf of Maine is critical habitat for right whales. Large scale industrial aquaculture in critical habitat of an endangered species cannot be allowed, as any adverse effects from such operations on the health of right whale population would immediately be used to further implement more regulations on wild fisheries. At a time when we are desperate to grow the right whale population, why would ever introduce more hazards and obstacles into their recovery?

The waste that is produced from fish farm operations would end up in prime lobster habitat. The lobster pollution is already facing pressures related to warming waters, reduced juvenile settlement, and increased predation from predatory fish such as black sea bass. Building fish pens that would pollute the surrounding areas would only create new hazards to the health of the lobster population.

Maine lobster fishermen is also facing the loss fishing grounds due to seasonal closures for migrating right whales, and in the near future, the construction of offshore windmills. Losing more area to industry scale aquaculture would add to the already significant challenges the lobster industry.

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