



April 24, 2023

The Honorable Margaret Rotundo, Senate Chair
The Honorable Melanie Sachs, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
% Office of Fiscal and Program Review
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

We at Atlantic Sea Farms support LD 1480 “An Act to Protect Union Wharf and Sustain Maine’s Maritime Industries” and those working to protect, preserve, and maintain working waterfront in Maine.

Atlantic Sea Farms is based in Biddeford. Our founders created the first commercially viable seaweed farm in the United States in 2009, with the goal of diversifying how our coastal waters are used and providing a domestic, fresh, healthy alternative to imported seaweed products. Today we work with 30 partner farmers – the vast majority of whom are fishermen looking to diversify their income stream in the face of climate change – to grow kelp in their lobster off-season. Eleven of those partner farmers land their kelp in Casco Bay and account for more than half of our annual line-grown kelp harvest. In 2022, Atlantic Sea Farms constituted more than 90% of all of the line-grown kelp landed in Maine and our partner farmers are leading the charge in climate-change adaptation and mitigation through growing kelp.

Maine has 3,500 miles of coastline, but only about 20 miles of that shoreline is devoted to working waterfront that serves commercial fishing, aquaculture, and associated maritime-based businesses. Pressure from increased coastal development and climate change are rapidly diminishing ocean access for those who make their livelihoods on the water. Fishermen and farmers along the entire coast of Maine struggle to find well-maintained working waterfront with the infrastructure, such as the fuel, ice, load-rated hoists, and storage, needed to effectively run their businesses. When Atlantic Sea Farms was working to expand its operations two years ago we landed in Biddeford, more than two miles from the ocean, because we were unable to find adequate and affordable wharf and processing space in Portland. There is a critical need to maintain the 20 miles of working waterfront we have left on our coast and to support those, such as GMRI, working to preserve these sites.

Despite Portland being surrounded by the ocean and working boats, there are incredibly few facilities that industry can rely on. Union Wharf is one of only a few wharfs left in Portland that remains accessible to the working waterfront. It offers a growing industry like ours the potential of leasing a berth, laydown space, and using important landing facilities for fishermen and farmers. At a time when our valuable working waterfronts are disappearing at an alarming rate, we are deeply appreciative of GMRI’s efforts to preserve Union Wharf as a working wharf and to protect the wharf from future development pressure to ensure that wild and farmed seafood have a place in Portland Harbor forever. If they had not stepped up we believe that these important pieces of real estate would have been lost as working waterfront forever.

Please support GMRI’s effort to protect Union Wharf and help ensure that Maine continues to have a reliable working waterfront.

Sincerely,

Aurora Burgess
Seaweed Aquaculture Coordinator, Atlantic Sea Farms