

Testimony in Support

LD 508, *Resolve, Directing the Department of Environmental Protection to Review Its Environmental Permitting Laws*, as amended by the sponsor.

Todd Martin

National Parks Conservation Association

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Todd Martin. I am the Northeast Senior Program Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. NPCA was founded in 1919 to advocate for our nation's national parks, national monuments, and historic sites. In my role, I advocate for National Park Service sites in Maine including Acadia National Park, Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, Roosevelt-Campobello International Park, St. Croix Island International Historic Park, and the Appalachian Trail. I am here today to testify in support of LD 508, *Resolve, Directing the Department of Environmental Protection to Review Its Environmental Permitting Laws*, as amended by the sponsor.

A study commission is needed to examine how marine-based, industrial scale aquaculture is treated and regulated differently than land-based, RAS, industrial-scale aquaculture, Maine DEP and DMR's permitting authority, and how the Site Law and Natural Resources Protection Act apply to marine-based aquaculture. Much has changed since DMR's Chapter 12 Aquaculture licensing program became law fifteen years ago.

Aquaculture is a critical industry here in Maine and our state has a long history of small-scale, local, sustainable aquaculture such as clamming, muscle farming, and seaweed farming. However, in recent years, we've seen a dramatic increase in industrial, finfish aquaculture proposals for Maine's coast. NPCA was deeply concerned with the proposal by American Aquafarms to develop a marine-based finfish aquaculture operation in Frenchman's Bay. If approved the project would have built 30 floating deep-water fish pens that would discharge more than 4 billion gallons of untreated wastewater into Frenchman Bay every day. The excess nitrogen, phosphorous, ammonium and other chemicals from this untreated effluent could degrade water quality, affecting federally endangered Atlantic Salmon and increasing the risk of harmful algae blooms. This fish farm would have operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with diesel-powered pumps and generators, just 2,000 feet from the park, in a space used for boating, fishing and swimming.

According to the National Park Service, in 2021 Acadia National Park welcomed approximately 4.1 million visitors which generated an estimated \$486 million in visitor spending. These expenditures had a total economic output of about \$702 million that supported more than 6,800 jobs in the local region. Acadia is a critical part of the Maine economy and we need to protect the visitor experience. In addition to threats to Acadia, we are also concerned about potential future proposals for industrial-scale finfish aquaculture impacting Maine's other coastal national park units including Roosevelt-Campobello International Park and St. Croix Island International Historic Park.

Before we see new industrial-scale aquaculture proposals in Maine, from American Aquafarms or otherwise, we believe it is essential ensure Maine is in the best position to protect our coastal waters and the people who live, work, and recreate there. We support LD 508 as amended to establish a study

commission to examine the current regulatory framework, consider how land-based and marine-based projects are regulated differently, how Maine's Site Law and NRPA apply, and how to strengthen Maine's regulatory framework.