

Captain Eric Wallace
Coastal Fly Angler
LD 2065

I, Captain Eric Wallace, Registered Maine Tidewater Guide with over 20 years of guiding experience on Casco Bay in the Yarmouth/Freeport area am submitting testimony opposing LD 2065.

1) Oppose the proposed 500% increase from 5 people to 25 people required to request a hearing. This proposed change places more burden on the public, reducing the public's voice and choice.

Where does 25 come from? This proposal conflicts with a well known standard in Maine - Per the Maine Department of Secretary of State website, the Maine Administrative Procedures Act (A.P.A.) allows for a request by five persons and an agency must hold a hearing. DMR should support the same goal of the APA which states: "Since public access and input are major goals of the law, a hearing is a useful method of informing and educating the public and for receiving public response."

The threshold of 5 people to request a hearing should be maintained.

2) Oppose entire proposal on conversion of limited purpose lease. Furthermore, disagree with the proposed change that a new assessment would not be required to be performed. A new assessment should always be performed when considering proposed lease and surrounding area, to evaluate the possible effects, including ecologically significant flora and fauna.

The proposed modifications creating a conversion of limited purpose lease should be eliminated.

3) Oppose the proposal for only once posting in newspaper. Public awareness is already at a minimum - very few people look at a newspaper. This proposal is insufficient notice to the public. This proposal appears as a check the box step only for the agency's benefit that disregards what is useful or helpful to the public.

Public notice should be taken seriously by the agency and could include sending notice through every fishing license and registration, posting through Harbormasters at docks, posting in several online sites including municipal offices, notice to stakeholders including but not limited to Strippers Forever, Captains Association, Guides Association, Kayak Clubs, Duck hunting clubs, etc.

In addition DMR should commit to attending all hearings and at a minimum announce if DMR will be attending at upcoming hearings to inform public and those who want to speak with them at a hearing.

4) It is understood that DMR has limited resources however, DMR also has great responsibility to uphold the laws and standards. The public should not suffer or be diminished because of a government agency's operational challenges.

I am greatly concerned about the loss of public resources for public use including boating, kayaking, fishing and more due to the alarming growth of aquaculture leases in Maine. In the last 5-7 years, the placement of the limited purpose leases and permanent aquaculture leases has had an astounding growth, in a very short time in a large area of Casco Bay that has caused a loss to general public use, impacting anglers, navigation and overall general public recreational and public use.

Furthermore, these leases are being allowed to be transferred or sold which is another problem that needs to be revisited and addressed.

Thank you for hearing these concerns and recommendations opposing LD 2065. Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like to discuss further. As I've offered in the past, I'm happy to take DMR personnel or any Member of the Marine Resources Committee of the Maine Legislature out for a site visit on my skiff to show how the fish and anglers use these areas on any given tide.

Captain Eric Wallace