



March 20, 2024

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

RE: LD 2266, An act regarding offshore wind terminals located in coastal sand dune systems

Co-chairs Senator Brenner and Representative Gramlich, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

Islesboro Islands Trust and the Alliance for Sears Island continue to urge you to vote “ought not to pass” LD 2266 for the reasons we discussed during the hearing. This bill prematurely establishes an exemption to coastal sand dune system protections and creates a troubling governmental policy precedent.

However, we appreciate this opportunity to provide additional information for your consideration before acting on this bill.

We know that two of three Sears Island coastal sand dune systems are located on and near the proposed offshore wind manufacturing facility – next to the jetty and along the northwestern shore. Maine Coastal Sand Dune Rules at Chapter 355 remind us that these systems are dynamic, critically important and worthy of protection and enhancement. Maine’s Sand Dune rules and law do not distinguish between man-made or naturally occurring coastal sand dune systems. Though I am not a geologist, knowledgeable others suggest that not only do wind and waves contribute to sand dune formation and modification but changes in vegetation immediately adjacent to a coastal sand dune system will impact the system.

Therefore, the 1985 removal of vegetation on Sears Island immediately adjacent to the planned cargo port and eventual (probably early 1990) placement of the large granite blocks that form the jetty, probably contributed to the coastal sand dune system now found there. A large staging area at the Sears Island shore was cleared, wetlands filled, and a gravel surface created to provide access to and space for the jetty granite and steel that were intended for the proposed cargo port. All this activity surely impacted shoreland and intertidal characteristics in this Sears Island area.

The proposed construction of a Sears Island offshore wind manufacturing facility would remove all vegetation from approximately 75 acres, destroy close to 25 acres of existing and historical freshwater wetlands and two streams, excavate some 1,200,000 cubic yards of earth from that site, utilize a substantial portion of that harvested mineral as fill for the proposed quay and then compact the resulting surface to provide a relatively level, nonpermeable area capable of supporting immense turbine foundation loads.

We know that this activity would eradicate the jetty sand dune system. But we also need to consider

how this intensive alternation of Sears Island's western shoreline, as well as future use of the new quay, might directly or indirectly impact the coastal sand dune system located approximately 1,500 feet north of the significantly altered offshore wind facility area. See attached illustration.

Given the magnitude of terrestrial and marine change that construction of the proposed offshore wind facility on Sears Island requires, as well as the dynamic nature of coastal sand dune systems, how might any amendment to LD2266 that proposes to protect further the already protected northwestern sand dune system realistically work? Defining a mechanism to protect further or enhance the northwestern sand dune system seems to impose an immense if not impossible challenge in this circumstance. We hope the Committee will simply stay the course, vote "ought not to pass" at this time, until considerably more information about alternative offshore wind facilities becomes available, and maintain Maine's existing coastal sand dune system protections.

I appreciated Co-chair Senator Brenner's attempts to keep testimony during the hearing focused on LD2266, even as numerous other offshore wind facility issues were brought forward by many of those presenting testimony. On behalf of my home community, Islesboro, and my work with Islesboro Islands Trust, I served as an interested party to the cargo port permit proceedings in the 1980's and 90's, served on an MDOT advisory group during cargo port discussions, served on the Baldacci administration's Sears Island Planning Initiative and Joint Use Planning Committee and served on the more recent Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group (OSWPAG). I therefore bring extensive background to the matters at hand and became concerned when I heard what I would call inaccurate comments during the hearing that are now on record.

Because I know you have much to consider today and going forward, I will, as briefly as possible, offer a few notes for the record that are germane to this matter. I am happy to provide more detail at the Committee's request.

- OSWPAG information shows that Mack Point provides more than sufficient space and other characteristics to support a commercial scale offshore wind manufacturing facility.
- Offshore wind development scenarios for Mack Point preserve all current terminal handling capability and mitigate the impact of fetch and southwest winds.
- Publicly available OSWPAG information shows that construction costs at Mack Point and Sears Island are essentially the same.
- Dredging 61,000 cubic yards or less to build at Mack Point is less than many other noncontroversial dredging projects and can be accomplished safely using new technology and best practices.
- The Sears Island Planning Initiative's Consensus Agreement stated -
  - "No soil harvesting" on Sears Island
  - "Mack Point shall be given preference as an alternative to port development on Sears Island"
- Thoughtful review of currently available information leads to the conclusion that Mack Point is the least environmentally damaging alternative for the proposed offshore wind facility.

Thank you.

# Penobscot Bay Offshore Wind Development Proposals and Coastal Sand Dune Systems

