

Katie Giddings
Waldo
LD 226

Greetings Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and ENR Committee Members,
My name is Katie Giddings, I live in Waldo, ME and I am testifying in support of LD 226.

I have loved Sears Island since I was a child. Like many locals, have rode the waves of anxiety and relief as each new threat of development loomed over the island and was pushed back. It is time to recognize that the island's best and highest use is not as an industrial site, but in its current form. It is a place of peace and beauty providing habitat for wildlife, and environmental benefits like cooling the waters of the Penobscot Bay estuary and sequestering carbon. And it is a place where, as a child, I felt a sense of awe at the vastness and beauty of a wild island. My family didn't have money for travel, or even for Acadia very often, but at Sears Island we felt like the luckiest people in the world to live so close to this free and accessible paradise. Now when I bring my son and we spend a day climbing rocks, marveling at mossy streams and towering ferns, and swimming in the sparkling water, I find myself saying "Can you believe we live in such a beautiful place?!"

Lately those pushing for a wind port on the island have painted their opponents as motivated by NIMBY-ism: a "not in my back yard" attitude. To counter this narrative, I will share that I have a master's degree in Environmental Management and Sustainability from Harvard, and am pro-renewable energy. When I lived in Salem, MA I served as Vice President of Salem Alliance for the Environment (SAFE), and helped push for the closure of Salem's coal fired power plant, and the building of its first wind turbine. Since I moved back to Maine, SAFE has supported a new wind port on the site of the old coal plant. This is my old back yard, but I find it a perfect use of that destroyed and polluted space. Sites like this, and like Mack Point in Searsport, are exactly where we should be building our renewable energy future: the ecosystems that were once there are long gone, so building there does not destroy anything of value.

Defenders of Sears Island are not saying "Not in my back yard". We are only asking to save one special part. To extend the metaphor: as individuals, when we build in our actual back yards we choose an appropriate spot. Maybe in the gravelly corner where an old shed used to be. We don't bulldoze our prized rosebush into our fishpond. Sears Island represents why we love living in Maine. Let us protect it while we have the chance. If a wind port is to be built on Penobscot Bay, Mack Point is where it belongs. It is time to place the entirety of Sears Island in conservation, and stop the exhausting fight over this place, which has resulted in so much wasted energy, time and money over the decades.
Thank you.