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Thanks to State Senator Nichole Grohoski and the Sierra Club, last summer I had the opportunity to tour Sprague Energy on Mack Point, seeing where the proposed wind port would be located if Mack Point were to be chosen as the site. We studied charts and diagrams showing how changes would be made to existing operations and walked the area to get perspective. We listened to facts and figures from Jim Therriault, VP of Materials Handling-Sprague Fuels, and Blair Taylor, Searsport Terminal Manager at Sprague. Many questions were asked, and many answers given. I learned a great deal that I feel is not particularly common knowledge and would like to share those points in the bullets below.

- Although Irving Oil has operations at the site, they are not connected to Sprague in any way. They simply lease space.
- Sprague would not have built the port if it had been sited there. No matter where the site for the wind port would have been located, the State would have contracted with an outside company to build and maintain the facility. Sprague would simply have provide the site.
- If the State proposed site area at Sprague were moved to an area a bit further east, it would have made more sense. There would be considerably less dredging needed. Eighty-five percent less dredging, to be precise, and a savings of over \$50 million dollars. The dredging and the cost of that dredging was publicized as a major item in the State objections to Mack Point.
- The wetland destruction on Sears Island would have been huge. On Sears, there are over ten acres of wetlands, vernal pools and two streams that would be affected. At Mack Point, using the state's design, there are six acres of freshwater wetlands affected with no streams or vernal pools. If the design were shifted, as Sprague suggested, the compromised wetlands would have been less than three acres.
- Both Sears Island and Mack Point would have involved considerable fill work to create the area needed. Sprague would have needed to fill 35 acres, using the material removed from the potential site on their property for most of that. Sears Island would have needed to fill 20 acres and would also be using site prep material. At Sears, however, they would have far more material removed than is needed for the fill job. Materials removed to prep the site on Sears would be mature oak groves, sand dunes (sand dunes that were exempted from their federal protection by a special action of the Maine legislature) , and 1.5 million cubic yards of soil. Much of this would have had to be trucked off of the island, taken across the new heavy-load access road or the new RR spur, both of which would have needed to be built to service the port.
- Both the trucking road and the RR necessary for a Sears Island port will not only dissect wildlife habitat but will also infringe on the conservation easement. This easement of 601 acres is held by Maine Coast Heritage Trust. It bears saying here that Sprague already has a RR spur on site, and also roads that support heavy trucking. Already, even though no funding is available, there has been work done (borings) under the umbrella of the State that cut a large swath of mature trees and severely impacted valuable habitat. This costly process was funded by taxpayer money--Maine money wasted on work no longer needed for a project that had never been fully funded in the first place.
- One especially disturbing point was an indication that when Federal Agencies would come in to make decisions on placement of the wind port, they would not have done their own studies, but seemingly would have relied on studies done by the state. Studies that are no longer accurate and contained flawed information.

Even though a wind port is now in serious question, a plan for future siting of that port—or any other similar project--at Mack Point/Sprague Energy makes obvious common sense. Hopefully that will be seen.

However, the death of the wind port does not mean that Sears Island is saved. It has simply been reprieved for the moment. While the pressure is off, so to speak, this

jewel of the Maine coast should be placed under conservation easement in total. There has been a long list of proposed projects to be placed on Sears, and they have all been rejected...thankfully wise minds prevailed.

The population of the area is in favor of a conservation easement. The island is used extensively for recreation that consists of activities from dog walking and birding to family picnics and beachcombing.

A protected and conserved Sears Island is not going to just sit there in Penobscot Bay, existing just because it is visually appealing! It is going to be working every day for the bay, the atmosphere and the area in general, doing it's bit to fight climate change daily.

The island is heavily forested...helping endlessly by removing greenhouse gases through carbon sequestration. In 2025 alone, the island will sequester 88,750 metric tons of carbon—the equivalent of 74,000 cars in that same year.

The forests work non-stop to protect the Penobscot Bay Estuary to help both the nurseries and the migrating fish by cooling bay waters. Waters that are warming rapidly. The trees are also a key reason that Sears is so beloved by birds and birders! The island is a critical stop-over during migration, and its diverse habitat is life blood to many vulnerable species.

The recreation benefit to the area is obvious, and extends to a less obvious economical benefit. There are bikers, runners, walkers, birders, dog walkers, picnickers, beach combers and more, enjoying the essence daily that is Sears Island, who, in addition to spending time on Sears, spend money in local businesses. This support of the local economy is an important sidebar to conservation of the island.

The Wabanaki people know how valuable Sears Island (Wahsumkik, or 'shining beach') is—it has been part of their history for over 3,400 years. Let's hope current wisdom lets that history continue.

And...to top it off—Maine government has wasted over \$24 million in the attempted development of Sears over the years. Over \$4 million on the current wind port.

Obviously, Sears Island is a valuable piece of property—valuable to the economics of the area, to wildlife, to climate, as a recreation site, and simply as a beautiful place where people can find quiet and peace. As such, let's look forward to the day arriving when we know that Sears Island is saved. Let's take action now by campaigning to conserve the rest of Sears Island! Let's campaign to make it a State Park or, even better, an official wildlife refuge with the entire island open to everyone, 2 footed, 4 footed, or winged!

Sears Island Wildlife Refuge...it has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?

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