

James McCarthy  
Brunswick  
LD 226

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Doudera, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Re: Support for LD 226, An Act to Protect the Cultural Resources and Historical Heritage of Sears Island in Searsport by Extending Conservation Easement Projections

My name is James McCarthy and I am a retired journalist who lives in Brunswick. I'm grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of LD 226.

As an occasional visitor to Sears Island I've appreciated its unique qualities as a mostly undeveloped island with trails that will take you through forests and open fields, wetlands where you might hear a chirping wood frog, a sandy beach where you might see a harbor seal poking its head of the water to get its bears and just offshore there's eelgrass that serves as an important nursery habitat for juvenile fish and shellfish. On one excursion last spring with my friend Gary Lawless, a poet who grew up in Belfast and has known Sears Island his entire life, we were greeted by a chestnut-sided warbler whose call "Pleased, pleased, pleased to meetcha!" we took as a friendly greeting to both of us, not just a call seeking a mate. Sears Island is an essential habitat for North Atlantic birds, with as many as 222 species spending time there.

Although the 100-acre "transportation parcel" identified as the state's preferred site to build a \$450million-\$500 million wind port is frequently referred to as ONLY impacting one-third of the island — implying that the remaining two-thirds will remain undeveloped, so what's the problem? — that does not accurately convey how utterly destructive the wind port will be if it's allowed to be built. It is intended, after all, to be an industrial site, so there will be the sounds of engines and machinery, the backing-up beeps of trucks delivering wind turbine components. There will be a greatly expanded entrance road that cuts through the lower portion of the supposedly protected parcel of the island. It will have pretty much constant traffic from the dozens of workers and large commercial trucks making deliveries to the industrial site.

So, in my view, which is shared by many others, allowing the wind port project to proceed will, in fact, forever transform Sears Island into an industrial site. No longer will it be a place of refuge for those of us who go there to hear the wind move through pines, to marvel at the thousands of ferns that line the trails as you walk to the southern point of the island for wonderful views of Penobscot Bay. It would greatly diminish the very qualities that made this place an important base for the ancestral Wabanaki who called the island "Wassumkeag" ("bright sand beach") and used it for hunting, fishing and resting as they paddled birchbark canoes to and from the various islands and peninsulas of Penobscot Bay.

I urge you to approve this bill with a solid "ought to pass" vote, followed by your continued support as it moves through the Legislature.

With the Biden administration's rejection of the state's request for \$456 million in funding, the fact there were no bids at the Oct. 29, 2024 auction of federal leases for Gulf of Maine wind development, and the Trump administration's antagonism toward offshore wind, a Sears Island wind port seems, even more than before, to be a very remote possibility. If and when there's a need for a wind port here in Maine, there's a viable already industrialized alternative at Mack Point, where Sprague Energy has put forward a detailed alternative plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.