

Jay McCreight
Harpswell, ME 04079
**Support for LD 1026, An Act to Provide Mapping Services for
Aquaculture Lease Siting**

March 27, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, esteemed members of the Marine Resources Committee, I am Jay McCreight of Harpswell testifying in support of LD 1026, An Act to Provide Mapping Services for Aquaculture Lease Siting.

The importance of Maine's fisheries, including aquaculture, can't be overstated. As we see changes in climate and in our fisheries, developing meaningful ways of fostering success and collaboration while reducing conflict among fisheries is not only desirable, it is critical.

I write to share my personal experience of Harpswell's actions that support the proposal put forward in LD 1026. Through the work and expertise of many, I believe we were able to arrive at a path to a constructive, collaborative approach to address an initiative that has been put forward regarding aquaculture leases and licenses, specifically, efforts to promote town-enacted moratoriums.

When the idea of town moratoriums was brought up in Harpswell, the Selectboard authorized and held two public Workshops leading to the decision to form an Aquaculture Working Group to address the issue directly.

As a former legislator, two-term House chair of the Marine Resources Committee and a resident of Harpswell, I attended both Workshops and volunteered to be a member of the new Working Group. At each Workshop and in the Working Group, I stressed that aquaculture licensing and leasing are the purview of the State of Maine, not of municipalities and that we shouldn't waste time or resources on an ill-advised effort that only, in my opinion, increases conflict and ill will.

The Aquaculture Working Group includes a broad representation of stakeholders including lobstermen, a marine-related business operator, an aquaculture farmer, a marine scientist and aquaculture farmer, a shellfish harvester, a member of a fisheries advocacy group. I volunteered as an interested resident and former legislator. A Selectboard member and our Harbor Master are participants and all meetings are public.

As an outcome of public comments, the Workshops and the Aquaculture Working Group process, it was decided that mapping Harpswell's high-value

fishing areas would provide up-to-date, accurate and readily available information for anyone interested in our fishing industries and related activities, including but not limited to potential aquaculture lease and license applicants. I want to stress that this mapping work does not preclude anyone from applying for a license or lease through Maine's Department of Marine Resources. Instead, it provides relevant, useful and publicly available information to help a potential applicant in their decision making prior to any significant outlay of time and money.

Gathering data for mapping:

- Harpswell is a peninsular community with distinct "villages." Fishermen and any interested parties were specifically invited to three separate meetings in three parts of town to color code high-value fishing areas, including aquaculture sites.
- Maps for marking up were also made available at the Town Office.
- Maps were taken directly to fishermen for inclusivity and completeness.
- A specifically scheduled Working Group meeting was held for the public to review and make any additions to the nearly finalized maps.
- The resulting GIS maps, being finalized now, also include moorings, businesses, recreational uses - any related activities.
- The maps will be presented to Town residents at an upcoming Town Meeting and, once approved, will appear on the Town website and will be updated at least annually.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I urge you to support actions that help reduce conflict and at the same time support our valuable and diverse fisheries and our valued and diverse population of fishermen. LD 1026 offers that opportunity.

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