



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
21 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0021

CARL J. WILSON
COMMISSIONER

March 17, 2026

Senator Joseph Baldacci, Chair
Representative Suzanne Salisbury, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

On behalf of the Department of Marine Resources, I am writing to respectfully request that the Committee remove the proposed repeal of the Department of Marine Resources Advisory Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission from LD 2228, An Act to Eliminate Inactive Boards and Commissions.

The Department of Marine Resources Advisory Council is a 17-member Council, created to provide the Commissioner with information and advice concerning the administration of the department. The Council also has “advice and consent” authority over Department rule-making, and is responsible to review many of the Special Licenses issued by the Department for the purposes of research and education. The chair of the Lobster Advisory Council, the Sea Urchin Zone Council, the Shellfish Advisory Council and the Aquaculture Advisory Council are ex officio members of the council. Other members are appointed by the Governor and subject to review by the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources. Five members must be persons licensed to engage in commercial harvesting activities. The remaining 8 members include two individuals representing recreational fishing interests, one public member, one member who is a member of a federally recognized Indian nation, tribe or band in the State, and 4 persons who represent wholesale seafood dealers. The composition of the council reflects a geographic distribution along the coast. Five members of the Council have recently been confirmed earlier this session, and there are five additional nominations pending in the Marine Resources Committee this week and next.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of 27 nearshore fish species. Each state is represented on the Commission by three Commissioners: the director of the state’s marine fisheries management agency, a state legislator, and an individual appointed by the state’s governor to represent stakeholder interests. Representative Hepler is the current legislative designee to the Commission. The purpose of ASMFC is to promote cooperative management of fisheries — marine, shell, and diadromous — of the Atlantic coast of the United States by the protection and enhancement of such fisheries, and by the avoidance of physical waste of the fisheries from any cause. Participation at ASMFC ensures that states can engage in interstate commerce for the species managed through the Commission process.

Both the DMR Advisory Council and ASMFC have met regularly during the past 2 years. ASMFC meets quarterly, and three of their meetings each year take place in Alexandria, VA. The fourth meeting takes place in one of the member states. Due to a vacancy at DMR, the DMR Advisory Council met less frequently in recent years, meeting twice in 2024 and once in 2025. DMR has attempted three times to fill the Marine Resource Management Coordinator position that is responsible for staffing this Council, but to date has been unable to do so. We are currently completing interviews for the fourth hiring process since 2024 and are hopeful we will identify a successful candidate in this current round. Regardless, we will ensure any deficiencies in reporting are immediately addressed, and will ensure it does not happen again.

Thank you for your consideration and please let me know if you require any further information.

Sincerely,



Deirdre Gilbert
Director, State Marine Policy
Maine Department of Marine Resources