

Good Afternoon, Senator Brenner - Representative Gramlich, and members of the joint standing committee on the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

My name is Ariana Fischer and I own a business in Portland and work on environmental efforts in Downeast Maine. I am also a member and director of Protect Downeast, an organization that formed out of community concerns over an industrial aquaculture facility in Jonesport which is currently under appeal because of our concerns about discharges into the water. Protect Downeast cares about the environment in the entire region and is equally concerned about other large scale industrial projects potentially coming to Maine - like what we have seen with American Aquafarms and Heartland LLC representing a company that the state won't disclose.

I am testifying in support of LD 508 as amended. It's a good start with much more that needs to be done.

I am deeply concerned about the Department of Environmental Protection's review of environmental impacts on coastal waters.

Over the last year, I have watched how the Department makes its decisions with advocacy from the Department of Economic and Community Development about jobs of the future. In my observation, the DEP appears under-resourced to fulfill their responsibilities, especially when pressure is being exerted from another agency pushing for approvals because they see potential jobs. But, citing potential jobs in the immediate should never be a reason to approve projects that will likely have long term negative impacts for the wild harvest and coastal waters.

Once we do damage to a body of water it will take years for that body of water to recover, putting in jeopardy the traditional fisheries and the thousands of people in this state who depend on our clean coastal waters to make a living.

Right now, it's clear from documents I have looked at that then DEP can't possibly be doing its best work to protect the environment.

Six months ago, at our request, the DEP produced a list of outdated discharge permits into the water... It's 16 pages long and many of these permits have not been reviewed for over 1,000 days. The most pertinent to LD 508 is the general discharge permit for Cooke Aquaculture. I am happy to forward this list if the committee is interested.

Cooke holds approximately 640 acres in Maine, and they have been operating under their 2019 permit. We know there have been issues such as the die off at Black Island but still the general permit has not been reviewed and updated. Is this best practice for protecting the environment and the coastal waters of Maine?

I have spoken with small owner/operator aquaculturists whose projects we whole-heartedly support. In fact, we are hoping to launch an effort this summer to work with fisherman on how to do small aquaculture that is in harmony with marine harvesters.

I fully support a study group that would look at the science and a more robust regulatory system that protects everyone. We have one ocean. We have a public trust. We cannot afford to give away one of

our greatest natural resources to corporations from away whose only interest is in profits, with much of those monies leaving not just the state, but the country.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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