



## Gulf of Maine Research Institute

Science. Education. Community.

April 20, 2023

Sen. Stacey Brenner, Senate Chair  
Rep. Lori Gramlich, House Chair  
Committee on Environment & Natural Resources  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
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Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Committee:

We encourage you to oppose *L.D. 508: Resolve, Directing the Department of Environmental Protection to Review Its Environmental Permitting Laws. L.D. 508 is both unnecessary and misplaced.*

First, the aquaculture industry in Maine is already subject to strict and rigorous regulations in coastal waters. Over the past 20 years as I've attended various aquaculture and sustainable seafood conferences around the country, I've been impressed repeatedly by Maine's reputation as being the nation's "best-practice state" regarding regulation and management of aquaculture in coastal waters. Thanks to the Maine Department of Marine Resources' (DMR) regulatory leadership and the aquaculture industry's promotion of best practices across the industry, our permitting process to develop aquaculture in coastal waters is strictly regulated and allows for extensive public notice and participation. The industry is working to continuously improve its husbandry practices, reduce its negative impacts in coastal waters, and enhance its positive impacts in coastal waters. We already have a robust aquaculture permitting process.

Second, although the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) does work closely with the DMR to regulate aquaculture discharges in marine waters it, is not the appropriate state agency to review the permitting of aquaculture in coastal waters. DEP's expertise is primarily with upland and wetland environmental regulation and management. DMR has the staff with the deepest scientific expertise, regulatory experience, user conflict understanding, and stakeholder experience related to aquaculture in coastal waters. Moreover, DEP's process for regulating siting of onshore recirculating aquaculture facilities cannot simply be extended into coastal waters; our coastal marine ecosystem functions entirely differently than our upland terrestrial ecosystem.

Third, we need to avoid creating unnecessary restrictions on aquaculture. As our coastal communities grapple with climate change over the coming decades, the responsible growth of aquaculture will be essential to economic diversification and coastal community resilience as nearshore commercial fishing opportunities are threatened by warming waters, acidification, and invasive species

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