

Good Afternoon,
Senator Cameron Reny, Representative Allison Helper and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources.

My name is Camden Reiss, I am a shellfish harvester in the town of Brunswick, in which I serve as chair of the marine resources committee. I am a consultant to Protect Maine's Fishing Heritage Foundation and organization that opposes industrial scale aquaculture but supports small scale owner- operator aquaculture.

I have been working the intertidal zone all over the coast of Maine digging bloodworms for around 12 years now, which has given me a chance to observe and learn about the marine ecosystem. I learned about the importance of preserving the keystone species and habitat, such as eelgrass and other naturally occurring filter-feeders.

I have visited hundreds of different coves and the ones with bountiful rockweed usually seem to have the most commercial resources. Rockweed is important to preserving a healthy marine ecosystem. To back up my claim, I sifted through some rockweed literature and found an interesting article called Rockweed in Maine's Intertidal Zone, written by Eva Leggae, a professor from Dartmouth. The importance and over all function of rockweed is described in the following quote:

"Heralded by some ecologists as the "old growth forest" of the sea, Ascophyllum is an essential ecosystem engineer upon which more than 150 marine species depend". Ascophyllum reduces physical stresses (such as drying, summer heat, high light, or wave exposure) for the affiliated intertidal communities. Though many species benefit indirectly from rockweed, most directly depend on its presence to survive; some, such as epiphytes and larvae, even affix themselves directly to the surface of the algae. In addition to providing a vital habitat, rockweed sequesters carbon and nitrogen, provides energy to the food web by feeding grazers, and helps nutrients stay distributed throughout the water column."

The issue I take with this bill is that opening rockweed up as a commercial fishery is going to lead to the depletion of the natural population, which will definitely have a negative impact on our coastal ecosystems. Maine's coastline is already suffering enough due to the effects of global warming and large-scale industrial aquaculture.

I strongly encourage the council to vote no on this bill in order to protect our precious marine ecosystem. Thank you for your time.