

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
From; Becky Bartovics
Date: March 17, 2024
Re: LD 2266 An Act Regarding Offshore Wind Terminals Located in Coastal Sand Dune Systems

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and Member of the Committee

My name Becky Bartovics and I am here personally to urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 2266. It is premature for the Administration to present legislation prior to the completion of the Maine Department of Transportation report illuminating the analysis of the port development. That report is due to be released in June, including the Moffat and Nichols report that was commissioned by MDOT for \$1.5 million. There is ample evidence that the port could be developed on Mack Point as presented by the Sprague Energy Engineering study, cc'd below.¹ And in the OSWPAG meetings the MDOT admitted that the marshaling port can be built on either Mack Point or Sears Island. An Environmental Impact Statement will be required according to the MDOT to actually assess all practicable alternatives. Very little information was offered to the OAWPAG in comparable analyses from my perspective attending as a member of the public. The jury is still out as to the best location for the port.

Some have been claiming that dredging Searsport Harbor would be more damaging than developing 100 acres on Sears Island and putting 25 acres of soil in historic eelgrass habitat. It is important for legislators to know that Searsport Harbor requires periodic dredging as do many ports in Maine. A true comparative analysis also of the economic impact and complete cost to the taxpayers has also not been provided, (omitting repairs to the causeway to Sears Island and any electric, water and sewage infrastructure, for instance).

Bringing legislation to skirt environmental laws at this point is not only premature but is particularly concerning when we recognize Maine's Senator Muskie's legacy. This is a slippery slope. No mitigation of those sand dunes will compare to the benefits to marine resources already provided by the contiguous sand dune, wetlands and forested wetlands. The island is unique and a treasure for the locals and visitors who otherwise would never tread on an island. Birders tout the vast numbers of migratory birds who use it as a stopover. Those migratory birds are also protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by the way. The extinction crisis is a real thing. The resources that Sears Island provides are part of nature based solutions to climate impacts of increased storms and sea level rise we ignore to our peril.

At the very least, this legislation is premature because the analysis that is due in June has not been provided. In the rush to deal with the climate crisis, we must remember that everything in

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<https://allianceforsearsisland.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/sprague-lower-impact-ocean-wind-terminal-plan-oct-2023.pdf>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/14/climate/what-about-nature-risk.html>

the world is interconnected. While it is incredibly important to move away from a fossil fuel economy, and promote renewable energy, there is an extinction crisis that equally threatens the planet. It is premature for the Administration to pursue development on coastal sand dunes prior to understanding all the variables. There will need to be an Environmental Impact Statement, as MDOT admits. Therefore the Governor's new bill, LD 2266, is premature, and should not be entertained by the Legislature even as it may be amended, until a full assessment of the issues and the alternatives is done. I urge you to vote ought not to pass.

Respectfully submitted,

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