



March 18, 2024

Senator Stacy Brenner
Representative Lori Gramlich
Chairs, Environment and Natural Resource Committee

Re: Testimony in Opposition to LD 2266

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee:

I am writing to you on behalf of Upstream Watch in regards to LD 2266, An Act Regarding Offshore Wind Terminals Located In Coastal Sand Dune Systems, which will be before you for public hearing this morning. **We urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on this bill.**

Upstream Watch is a non-profit organization based in Belfast, Maine that advocates for the health of Midcoast Maine's rivers and Penobscot Bay through science, education, and public action. We seek a vibrant, diverse and sustainable economy for the Midcoast and all of Maine, and recognize that healthy fresh and saltwater ecosystems are an indispensable part of this goal.

As an advocate for our waterways, Upstream Watch understands the urgency of the climate crisis and its far reaching impacts, including on the health of Maine's waterways. While we support Maine's pursuit of renewable energy alternatives, including offshore wind, we cannot support amending critical environmental protections for this project to move forward. Not only is this bill incredibly concerning in its attempt to evade Maine's environmental protections and permitting system, it sets a dangerous precedent for future development projects and their impacts to coastal ecosystems, and runs counter to the commitment by and efforts of the State of Maine and local communities to address the climate crisis.

Development of the proposed offshore wind facility on Sears Island will eradicate 75 acres of carbon sequestering forest and wetlands and 25 acres of living marine habitat. Passage of this bill would cause additional environmental harm by destroying a sand dune and threatening another located just north of the proposed facility. According to the Maine Geological Survey, cooperating with the Maine Coastal Program and NOAA, both of these Sears Island sand dune areas "... can reasonably be expected to become part of a coastal wetland in the next 100 years." It is well documented that coastal dunes and wetlands are the first line of defense in mitigating climate impacts. Addressing the climate crisis has to take many forms, and must begin with preserving ecosystems and places that are already providing resilience in the face of climate impacts.



This past fall, Upstream Watch joined the Alliance for Sears Island, and we share the Alliance's position that should an offshore wind terminal be built in the Penobscot Bay region, it should be located at Mack Point, not Sears Island. Sears Island is a place of significant ecological and recreational importance in the region, and one of the largest undeveloped islands on the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. Mack Point has been an industrial site for more than a century, and redevelopment of this port could allow for the construction of an offshore wind terminal in an already industrialized area, while keeping Sears Island and its critical ecosystems intact.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please vote 'ought not to pass' on LD 2266.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jill Howell".

Jill Howell, Executive Director
Upstream Watch