



MAINE

Lobstermen's Association, Inc.

2 Storer Street, Suite 203, Kennebunk, ME 04043
207-967-4555 * www.maine lobstermen.org

Against

LD 553 An Act to Assert State Sovereignty over Ocean Waters and Marine Resources up to 12 Nautical Miles off the State's Coast

LD 687 An Act to Assert State Ownership over Ocean Waters up to 12 Nautical Miles and Submerged Lands and Marine Resources up to 24 Nautical Miles off the State's Coast and to Direct the Attorney General to Study that Ownership

March 6, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Marine Resources Committee, my name is John Tripp. I am the Vice-President of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA). The MLA opposes LD 553 and LD 687 to extend Maine's sovereignty out to 12 miles from shore.

The MLA strongly supports the spirit of these bills which are intended to protect the Maine lobster industry from onerous federal regulations. Based on the preamble of LD 553, MLA assumes it is intended to address the severe restrictions in the catch limit for herring which is used as bait in Maine's lobster fishery. Unfortunately, the MLA does not believe this proposed legislation achieves the desired outcome.

Expanding Maine's territorial waters to 12 miles, as proposed in Section 1-A of LD 553, would not authorize the state to harvest a larger proportion of fisheries resources such as herring. Any herring caught in Maine state waters, whether caught within 3 miles from shore or 12 miles from shore, would go towards the overall herring quota which is set by the New England Fisheries Management Council under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Even herring caught from the same stock in Canada goes against the quota for U.S. herring fishermen. Similarly, the lobster management plan developed at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission would still apply to both state and federal waters regardless of where the lines are drawn, and all whale protections developed under the federal Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act would still come to the beach.

On the flip side, the state already has provisions in place to assert its authority over the harvesting of marine resources out to 200 miles for fishermen licensed in Maine. For example,

Maine does not allow lobsters that are illegal in Maine, such as dragger caught or oversized lobster, to be landed in Maine.

The MLA is concerned that LD 553 actually limits the state's authority over marine resources by reducing the state's sovereignty over the harvesting of living marine resources from 200 to 12 miles from the coastline under Section 2-A. Additionally, this bill removes the state's authority over submerged lands under Section 3. The MLA strongly opposes these changes.

Finally, the MLA is concerned that extending Maine's state waters to 12 miles could have unintended consequences by expanding the fishing area for all state commercial fishermen. This would increase the risk the Maine lobster fishery poses to right whales by pushing more effort into the areas that whales are more likely to frequent. This could result in even more stringent federal whale rules in the future.

The MLA supports the intent of these two bills but does not believe either would achieve the desired outcome. The MLA urges you to vote ought not to pass.

Thank you.