

Testimony – LD226
David Italiaander, Searsport
The Campaign to Protect Sears Island

Over the last hundred years a dozen commercial projects have foundered on Sears Island's shores.

Before the causeway, if you couldn't build it elsewhere you tried to build it on Sears Island.

Then came the state's attempts. 3 cargo port proposals and an LNG terminal proposal followed.

So fierce was the LNG opposition that Baldacci sought to find a compromise, 600 acres into permanent conservation while reserving 330 acres on the western shore for marine transportation after Mack Point Terminal was built out.

The SIPI/JUPC agreement stated that the appropriate uses for Sears Island were compatibly managed:

- Marine Transportation
- Recreation
- Education
- Conservation

And that Maine DOT would:

- Investigate Mack Point for marine transportation needs
- Collaborate to evaluate a cargo/container port at M.P. and/or S.I.
- Actively pursue proposals and partnerships for cargo/container port.

Which they did. A year later MDOT declared that Mack Point was too small and that they wanted to build a container port on the transportation parcel.

They did actively pursue proposals and partnerships for a cargo/container port.

They literally couldn't give the parcel away and failed to find a developer willing to fund it.

It died a quiet death.

Then came a manufacturing facility on Sears Island that was neither cargo nor marine transportation, clearly contravening the agreement, as did the planned removal of over 2 million cubic yards of soil. It failed to obtain vital federal funding and, lacking commercial viability, it is dead or, at best, in the throes of death.

If MDOT honored the agreement, we wouldn't be here.
17 years on and Mack Point Terminal sits half empty.
No one speaks of cargo port expansion anymore because it is a commercial fantasy. Cargo requires demand.

That leaves only projects that explicitly violate the agreement, like manufacturing, which can be done elsewhere in Searsport. History tells us that they will not stop. They will offer another project that violates the agreement, again with the promise of jobs, that will split communities, waste money, time and efforts.

Which is exactly why we need this legislation.

No jobs will be lost by conserving Sears Island because there are no jobs to be had there.

Conserving Sears Island is the reasonable and responsible thing to do for the health of Penobscot Bay and the benefit of the people in the region.

It is its best use.

Please advance LD226.