

**Testimony to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee**

**To:** Sen. Tepler, Rep. Doudera, and members of the ENR Committee

**From:** Meredith Bruskin, FNP, 27 Hillside Way, Swanville, Maine 04915

**Re:** Support for LD 226 "An Act to Protect the Resources and Historical Heritage of Sears Island in Searsport by Extending Conservation Easement Protections"

Sen. Tepler, Rep. Doudera, and members of the ENA Committee, my name is Meredith Bruskin and I live in Swanville. I am speaking in strong and urgent support of LD 226, as I believe it is time for us in the State of Maine to prioritize the conservation and protection of the natural resources we have, not only for the people of our state but for the entire planet. I believe this is more important than ever, with evidence of climate disasters increasing worldwide, in a time of worsening climate crisis and species extinction. As we all know, Sears Island is the largest undeveloped, uninhabited, causeway-accessible island on the East Coast. We have a chance to protect this beautiful island, that protects so many species, including us.

Unhappily, I believe the recent discussions about the best site for an offshore Wind Facility here in Maine have avoided looking at the entire picture of the environmental impact of developing Sears Island. The cost and effect on the intact ecosystems of constructing a new access road and rail line to the island I do not see included in either environmental or economic cost summaries of the recent proposal. According to many reports, intact forests and carbon sequestering ecosystems are the best tools for mitigating climate change, and the most economical. Sears Island provide both-as our Wabanaki neighbors have always appreciated. While the State of Maine pushes forward with the "Maine Won't Wait" climate action plan, it is also proposing a project that would severely impact key coastal wetlands and habitats critical to mitigating the impacts of climate change. It makes no sense.

Obviously this is not the first proposal for industrial development on our unique and beautiful island. When I learned that this most recent proposal includes the need to "harvest" (remove) more than 2 million cubic yards of soil from an area some 3.5 million square feet in size, on the edge of Penobscot Bay while purporting to be a project to mitigate climate change, I knew this was absolutely backward--again, it makes no sense if we care about our beautiful midcoast, and the decades of collaborative work that has gone into conserving the Island, and protecting the Penobscot Bay estuary.

It is time to truly conserve Sears Island, for ourselves, our kids and grandchildren, and for the planet. It really is common sense. Industrial development on Sears Island is not the answer. Preservation and conservation is---both for our climate action plan, and our economy. Please, stop any further spending of millions of taxpayer dollars on development plans that will only add to climate change--support LD 226. As members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, it only makes sense. Help us to conserve the entire island, once and for all. This is an opportunity that may never come again. Thank you for your attention.