

TESTIMONY March 12, 2025 IN SUPPORT OF LD 226:

**“An Act to Protect the Cultural Resources and Historical Heritage of Sears Island in Searsport
by Extending Conservation Easement Protections”**

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and ENR Committee Members:

My name is Donna Gold, I live in Stockton Springs and am testifying in support of LD 226 as the creator of Sears Island Stories—maybe you’ve had a chance to review the online booklet I sent last week.

I began it because while I’ve known what I’d be losing should Sears Island be industrialized, as an oral historian and former journalist, I wanted to know and also document what draws others to the island and what they feel they’ll lose should the island be crowded by heavy-duty trucks, swarms of workers, and constant noise.

This project has brought wonderful, surprising conversations with a wide range of Mainers and visitors, but what I hadn’t expected was how many people come to the island to heal life’s burdens:

A combat-wounded Vietnam veteran struggling with PTSD would go there, he wrote me, “to enjoy from the innermost reaches of my traumatized heart to the crown of my troubled head, the wonders that an open, uncluttered, non-commercialized island can yield. Sears Island saves lives. Leave the island be. Please.”

On a frigid winter day, a woman told me, “I walk Sears Island all the time, even when it’s freezing and the wind is blowing from every direction. This is a place of solace, of peace and fullness, where we can all feel it’s our very own space. A place to rejuvenate.”

Most poignant was the woman who for years, every day after work, came to the island to walk, even in the pitch-black of the winter’s cold. She walked for relief from the worst possible tragedy—the death of a child. “The island was so peaceful,” she said, “it helped me to feel better, it really did.”

Of course sadness and solace aren’t all that bring people to the island. It’s exercise, education, fun—often all three combined. It’s also a place to savor the woods and wildlife when limited to a wheelchair.

I’ll close with the group of motorcyclists who roared onto the causeway one summer afternoon. “I come here huntin’,” said the first man off his bike. “Not today, though”—it wasn’t hunting season! His friend told me about all the people he brings to the island, ending with this question: “What is what they’re proposing gonna to do for the greater good?”

There is a greater good and it can happen across the cove. My request to you is to read about the love evident throughout the booklet, *A People’s Island*, review Sprague Industries’ alternative plan for Mack Point, then pass LD226 to Let Sears Island be Wild and Free Forever.

WEBSITE: www.SearsIslandStories.org

BOOKLET: <https://searsislandstories.aflip.in/2ce12d0c11.html>

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