

Thank you distinguished members of the MRC

My name is Timmy LaRochelle and I am an elver fisherman since 1994 before there was an actual elver license.

I am a member of the ASMFC Advisory Panel, along with my colleague Sara adamaker of American Unagi, who operates Maine's first full scale eel farm.

I own shares in Maine Eel Trade and Aquaculture (META).

And I was recently appointed as the Executive Director of the Maine Elver Fishermen's Association (MEFA).

To put it mildly, I have a very strong, vested interest in the Maine glass eel fishery.

Since 2011, Maine's glass eel harvests have brought over \$240 million dollars to Maine economy, making our fishery the second or third highest grossing in the state most years.

Maine ships 95% to 100% of its eels to China to be farm raised in ponds to ¾ to 1 lb. in weight. **These eels are then processed in Chinese factories into high-value sushi products that we import back at almost ten times the cost of the raw materials we shipped to them in the first place.**

-Eel farming and processing could be a half billion-dollar annual industry in North America!

With help from the state of Maine, our industry is ready to step-up and start getting that "value add" by raising and processing these eels in our own state and country.

American Unagi has already begun this effort and is collaborating with META's affiliates to make sure we can all compete effectively against any other country in the world in this industry.

But everything we do relies on stable quotas and a sustainable industry. This is the foundation of the entire industry.

I am here today to support DMR's proposed legislation and to thank the Department for working with the harvesters to create bills that are fair and reasonable.

On behalf of MEFA, META and many of my industry colleagues, I also want to recognize our outgoing Commissioner Pat Keliher for more than a decade of service to Maine's fisheries and fair-minded support to the glass eel and lobster industries.

I also want to welcome the incoming Commissioner to his new position.

MEFA looks forward to a new era in its relations with the Department, the legislature and the Governor's office on all issues related to this important fishery, both in the state and before the ASMFC.

Wishing all harvesters a safe and successful season!