

For : LD 976 "Resolve, to Restore Accessible Public Transportation to Swan Island in Perkins Township"

My name is Amanda McDaniel, and I am the secretary of the Friends of Swan Island, and a resident of Richmond, Maine.

In 2024, IF&W put out a beautiful video marketing Swan Island as "Unique Access to a Unique Place". Please rename it "Potentially Deadly Access to a Unique Place."

Unless you are rich enough to own a boat, lucky enough to have a friend with one, or physically strong enough to navigate the extremely powerful tidal current of the Kennebec River, you cannot gain access.

If you have a boat, you have to be additionally lucky that there are no other boats docked at the campground side, it's too small.

We had three women in their sixties come from hours away, so excited to get on Swan Island. They weren't strong enough to kayak, so we said we would help them out. We found a date, checked the weather and tides. We tried to dock at the campground but two small boats were already there. We floated around for hours, waiting to see if they might leave. These women had to go back to their homes having never stepped foot on the island. Are we proud of this?

Is Unique Access really just two small boats per day in the high season?

Elderly people are out. People with disabilities are out. Children's groups are out.

Worse than all of this loss, someone could die just trying to get out to the island. We have witnessed canoes almost capsizing in strong wake. In several cases, we've seen canoeists being rescued and towed back to the mainland. The everyday person is not equipped to understand the Kennebec River, ... especially not tourists. So now tourists are out.

If you were to jump off the dock at the Richmond Waterfront Park and swim out a little further than 6 feet when the tide is going out, it can pull you out before you know it. The surface can be glassy and calm, meanwhile, entire toppled trees are rushing past just below the surface.

In between Swan and Little Swan, where the campground dock sits.. it's even worse. I've had many experiences trying to hold our boat to the dock and had to let go of the rope. Shoulder, wrist and back injuries are coming for all visitors to the campground dock.

If you are in a kayak going from the Richmond waterfront up and around the north end of the island to the campground, you are inevitably going against the tide on one side or the other. The double pull of an outgoing tide with the rushing river can't be underestimated.

The ferry provided the safest route for visitors to the island.

I would not want to be the State of Maine when a child dies because their family wanted to go camping, loaded up their canoe and a motor boat passes, with wake filling the boat.

Let's spend the money, find the resources, and make this a safe passage to one of the most important, historic, peaceful and beautiful islands on the eastern seaboard.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.