

Good afternoon, Representative Hepler, Senator Tepler and members of the marine resources committee, my name is Matthew Gilley and I am a 40 year old lobsterman from Harpswell. I am here to testify neither for nor against LD 1026 An Act to Provide Mapping Services for aquaculture lease siting. Over the past year the town of Harpswell has undertaken a large community outreach and mapping effort; for the waters around their town. This was done because the waters surrounding Harpswell are unique to that specific region of the Maine coast. There is a heavy commercial fishery still present off the coast of Harpswell; an occurrence that is becoming far more rare in Cumberland county. Harpswell has managed to carve out a specific niche for fishermen in this ever changing climate of gentrification. Harpswell is home to the most coastline in the state as well as the most licensed lobsterman. Harpswell is usually in the top ten for lobster landings. Also supporting a large clam and menhaden fishery. Over the last decade because of its extensive coastline, and close proximity to highly populated areas; Harpswell has seen an explosion of aquaculture. Harpswell is now home to 1/7 of all the leases issued in the state. As we see ocean uses increase and expand, we also see the same with conflicts and crowding out of heritage fisheries for new aquaculture leases. This is what led to the town to create an aquaculture workgroup. They came up with the idea of mapping current ocean uses already in place. This was done to encourage better siting practices that lead to reduced conflict's. They held meetings with DMR on what options they had as town and how to proceed. They also held over half a dozen public outreach meetings with area fishermen, and dozens of public workgroup meetings. Over this time frame they have been able to produce a map that is specific to Harpswell. Other towns could use our approach as a template, but not the map itself. There are dozens of communities along the coast that currently have no leases or a much smaller heritage fisheries present then Harpswell. Harpswell is unique as well in its geographical makeup. It's made up of 2 long peninsulas with dozens of islands intertwined. They are at the head of Casco bay with many streams, tributaries, and a river dumping into the bay in our town. This creates many unique currents, and restricted currents. One said example being the reversing falls in basin cove; where a waterfall is created in two different directions depending on incoming or outgoing tide. This phenomenon occurs nowhere else. Every community in Maine is different in its geography, infrastructure, population, access, and current fisheries. This makes it very difficult to approach the mapping with a template. This can't be a one size fits all approach. Several communities have reached out to Harpswell to understand how we completed this task; and we have been more than willing to share information and will continue to do so. This should be left up to towns to decide if, when, and how to map their waters not the state. Harpswell is more than willing to help other towns but does not want to fall under a state mandated template. A better tool would be a guide for towns to create their own maps. You could outline a process that towns could follow to develop their own maps. I would encourage the committee to explore adding language to have the state honor town's mapping efforts when siting leases. If towns are going to go through the time and effort to create maps then they should be honored by the state as an official document. This should not be a mandate for towns to complete either. Some towns dont have the resources or the need for mapping of their waters to be done. Thank you for your time.