



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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April 10, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1352:

An Act to Amend Provisions Regarding the Scallop Fishery License Apprentice Program, Licensing and Limited Access Areas"

Good afternoon, Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes the towns of Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. Maine's scallop fishery is an integral part of our coastal communities and economy. As someone who has witnessed firsthand the dedication of our fishermen and women, I'm here to speak in support of ***LD 1352—An Act to Amend Provisions Regarding the Scallop Fishery License Apprentice Program, Licensing, and Limited Access Areas.***

LD 1352 proposes a series of key reforms: first, revising our approach to the apprenticeship program; second, adjusting the licensing system for new entrants; and third, modifying the rotational access system for limited access areas. Let me outline each of these provisions and explain why they are necessary.

The first section of the bill addresses the apprenticeship program, which was originally intended to be conducted through a lottery system. The lottery system was envisioned to ensure fairness in granting entry into the scallop fishery for new apprentices. However, in practice, a lottery system is unfair to those who have a genuine interest in pursuing a career in the scallop industry. If we conduct the apprenticeship program through a lottery, aspiring apprentices will be at the mercy of chance, regardless of their level of interest, experience, or commitment to the trade.

Eliminating the lottery system and replacing it with a more structured and merit-based approach will provide greater flexibility and fairness. By creating a clear path for those committed to learning and working in the scallop industry, we can ensure that we are cultivating a skilled workforce for the future. This will also provide more predictable and equitable opportunities for entry into the fishery.

The second provision of the bill addresses the licensing system for new entrants into the scallop fishery. This proposed change helps maintain a limited entry system to prevent overfishing and ensures that new entrants are introduced into the fishery only when there is capacity to do so sustainably. It ensures that we do not exceed the resource's carrying capacity and helps maintain stable economic conditions for those currently involved in the scallop fishery.

A critical issue facing scallopers is the system of rotational access to limited access areas. While well-intentioned, this system has led to frustration among both dive and dragging license holders. Originally designed to ensure that fishing opportunities were spread evenly across the fleet, the rotational access system has instead created logistical issues and uneven economic impacts on fishermen.

By allowing all holders of dive and dragging licenses to have equal access to limited access areas during the same period, this provision will create more predictable and equitable fishing opportunities for all involved. It will ensure that all fishermen, regardless of their fishing method, have the opportunity to harvest from these areas without being restricted by the rotational system. This change will improve efficiency and help ensure a more level playing field for all participants.

This bill provides clear timelines for rule adoption and reaffirms that the Department of Marine Resources has sufficient time to engage with stakeholders and develop the rules that best address the needs of the industry. By setting a timeline for when these rules must be in place, we are ensuring that the changes are implemented in a timely and well-considered manner.

In conclusion, LD 1352 will provide significant benefits to Maine's scallop fishery by creating more equitable and efficient systems for apprenticeship, licensing, and access to fishing areas. By ensuring that entry into the fishery is based on merit, maintaining a balanced number of new entrants to sustain the resource, and providing more equal access to limited areas, we are taking important steps to create a fairer, more sustainable fishery. I urge the committee to support this bill, which will benefit not only the current workforce but also future generations of Maine fishermen.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham".

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader