



April 14, 2025

The Honorable Joseph Baldacci, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Tiffany Roberts, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
State House, Room 206  
Augusta, ME. 04333

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, Honorable members of the Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

My name is Sebastian Belle and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA). The MAA is the oldest state aquaculture association in the country. We represent Maine's aquatic farmers that raise finfish, shellfish and sea vegetables. Our farmers annually produce over 100 million dollars in farm gate revenue and directly employ roughly 700 Maine citizens year-round. We purchase goods and services from over 400 Maine businesses and our total economic impact is roughly 150 million dollars annually.

I stand before you today to testify Neither For Nor Against LD 1548 "An Act to Prevent the Introduction or Transfer of Invasive Fish Species in Inland Waters of the State". MAA supports the strict enforcement of laws and regulations designed to reduce the risk of introductions of invasive fish species in inland waters of the state. Having said that, we are concerned that as written LD 1548 may have an unintended consequence for our Atlantic Salmon aquaculture businesses. Sec.7 12 MRSA §12512 sub. 1. Applies to permits required to transport live fish within the state. LD 1548 proposes to strike the words "for breeding and advertising" and substitute "other than baitfish and smelts". We do not oppose that change; however the next section of the bill Sec. 7 12 MRSA §12512 sub. 2 also strikes the words "for breeding or advertising purposes". It is the combination of sub. 1 and sub. 2 that may present an unintended consequence for our salmon growers. By naming baitfish and smelt specifically in sub.1 and striking "for breeding" in sub.2. the draft language may be inadvertently requiring an Atlantic Salmon grower to get a permit for smolt being transferred to another hatchery or to the sea pen grow-out sites. To be clear MAA does not believe that is the intention of the bills sponsors, nor do we believe that the department of inland fisheries and wildlife want to have to issue permits for these activities.

Every year our salmon farmers transport millions of smolt and thousands of broodstock between their facilities. Sec.3 12 MRSA §12509, sub § 2 states clearly that the Commissioner may not adopt rules or issue permits governing any aspect of the commercial aquaculture of Atlantic Salmon when intended for use in commercial aquaculture in the coastal waters. Transfer and importation permits for these activities are currently issued by the USFWS and the Maine department of marine resources. In order to be clear that IFW permits are not required for the transport of Atlantic Salmon associated with commercial aquaculture operations MAA would suggest two small edits to LD 1548.

1. In Sec.3 12 MRSA §12509 sub §2, we would suggest adding some language to clarify that the exemption for permits applies to use in commercial aquaculture in coastal waters **and land based facilities**.

"the Commissioner may not adopt rules or issue permits governing any aspect of either the commercial aquaculture of Atlantic salmon when intended for use in commercial aquaculture in coastal waters, land based facilities or the Atlantic salmon restoration program"

2. In Sec 7.12 MRSA §12512 sub1. Insert the words "Atlantic Salmon used in commercial aquaculture " to clarify that the requirement for a transport permit does not apply to that species as well as baitfish and smelts.

"Except as otherwise authorized pursuant to this Part, a person may not transport within the limits of the State live fish taken in the State, other than baitfish, Atlantic Salmon used in commercial aquaculture and smelts, without a valid permit issued under this section."

Thank you for your attention, I would respectfully ask the committee to consider our suggestions and be glad to answer any questions you may have at the work session.

Sincerely,



Sebastian M. Belle  
Executive Director