

April 2025



To: The Committee on Marine Resources

RE: LD 1625 – An Act Regarding Preservation of Working Waterfronts

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Stacey Keefer, Director for the Maine Marine Trades Association (MMTA). MMTA represents over 120 Maine businesses and an industry comprised of boatyards, boat builders, marinas, boat dealers, marine retailers, and other marine businesses.

On behalf of the members of MMTA, we would like to express our appreciation for this bill that would create better mechanisms and funding to protect Maine's working waterfronts. We would also appreciate it if the Committee would consider some language amendments that would modernize the definition of working waterfronts to be more inclusive of our waterfront-dependent commercial businesses that serve our coastal communities. Many of our boatyards provide essential services for commercial fishing and farming, but also serve marine contractors, water taxis and ferries, marine salvage operations, plus the US Coast Guard, Maine Marine Patrol and other agencies, harbor masters, police and fire vessels. Many boatyards could not exist to strictly serve commercial vessels. The revenue from recreational vessels subsidizes the costs for critical shoreside infrastructure such as marine hoists, cranes, boat trailers, docks, piers, repair space, fueling systems and technicians. One boatyard in Maine invested \$2.5 M just for their marine lift and is constructing a 45,000 square foot building where large commercial vessels can be serviced indoors. Boatyards and marinas are a vital part of the working waterfront and are helping coastal communities thrive, but they cannot exist without waterfront property. These businesses face the same threats and challenges as do the working waterfronts under the existing definition.

The boating industry in Maine, including both recreational and commercial boats, has a \$3 Billion annual state impact (source: NMMA 2023 Economic Impact Study). Recreational boating and fishing are the leading contributors to the Maine Outdoor Rec Economy. The federal government's Bureau of Economic Analysis data indicates that the activities of recreational boating and fishing surpass the economic value added by the combined sectors of hunting, snow activities, hiking, camping, ATVing, equestrian, bicycling, and recreational flying in Maine. (source <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>). The impact is significant.

Nationally there is bipartisan legislation introduced and sponsored by federal delegates from Maine called the *Keep America's Working Waterfronts Act* (H.R.1808 in the 119th Congress). In that legislation they use the following definition:

The term '**working waterfront**' means real property (including support structures over water and other facilities) that—

“(A) provides access to coastal waters by coastal users; and

“(B) is used for, or supports, commercial and recreational fishing, recreational fishing and boating businesses, and boatbuilding, aquaculture, and other water-dependent, coastal-related business.

Therefore, we would appreciate consideration to amend the definitions in the following portions of LD 1625 where working waterfront is explicit to commercial fishing:

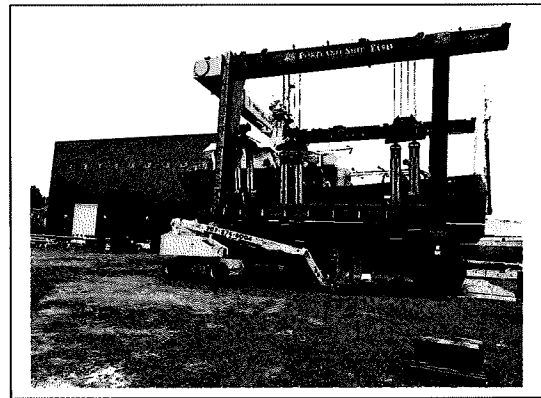
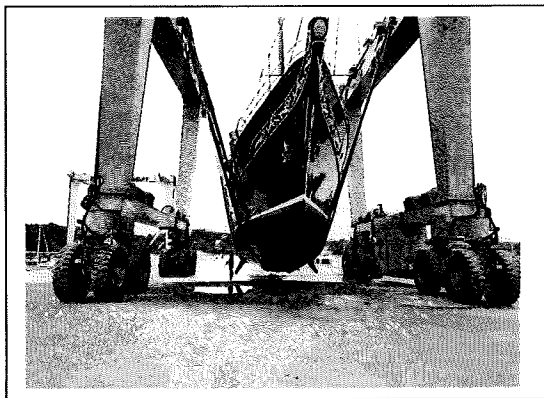
- Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §6200
- Sec. 4. 5 MRSA §6201, sub-§5
- And other appropriate sections

If there is concern that private yacht clubs could be included in the expanded definition as part of ‘water-dependent businesses’, perhaps additional language could be added that the water-dependent businesses are not exclusive and benefit a larger community or industry. We would be happy to collaborate on an appropriate language and answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,



Stacey Keefer
Maine Marine Trades Association, Executive Director



An example of boat lifting equipment that requires an investment (often several \$ million) to service large watercraft. The hauling of recreational vessels essentially subsidizes the expense, therefore keeping this service available in Maine for our commercial fishing fleet.