



Letter to the Committee on Marine Resources - in Support of LD 1279, An Act to Support the Growth of Maine's Farmed Atlantic Sea Scallop Industry Through Funding Biotoxin Testing and Other Services.

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Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler and Members of the Marine Resources Committee:

My name is Hugh Cowperthwaite, I am a resident of Falmouth, and I am here to speak in favor of LD 1279 to support the growth of Maine's Farmed Atlantic Sea Scallop Industry. Today I represent Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) where I am Senior Program Director for CEI's Fisheries and Aquaculture Program. In this role I am always on the lookout for opportunities for diversifying Maine's fisheries.

I first learned about Maine's relationship with Aomori, Japan when I was invited to participate in a delegation to visit Aomori in October 2010. Our goal was to learn about Aomori's energy practices and fisheries and share our experiences from Maine. I spent the next several days learning about Aomori's robust commercial scallop farming industry centered around Mutsu Bay. I had never seen anything like it. The people, their kindness, care and attention to detail all in the name of seafood production - I was truly amazed and inspired.

My mind was racing, and I said to myself "we can do this in Maine". I made friends quickly with our Japanese hosts and began making plans to host some guests in Maine. Since that first trip in 2010 I have helped many aquaculture and commercial fishing businesses in Maine by leveraging the opportunity I was given to visit Aomori and the contacts I've made. As a result, businesses have been launched and farmed (native) Atlantic Sea scallops are now available in Maine. There is no other farmed scallop like it on the national market. It's unique and fetches a premium price for our Maine growers. We have created a new fishery to help Maine's marine economy diversify.

But we can't stop now, growers are investing in equipment, securing lease sites and building businesses. Between CEI, Maine Sea Grant, Pen Bay Scallop Co, Vertical Bay, Hollander and de Koning and Maine Island Aquaculture we have collectively purchased over \$1M of specialized scallop farming equipment that is now being used in Maine. According to DMR's online inventory tool there are 56 leases & 85 Limited Purpose Aquaculture license (LPA) sites in Maine that currently have permission to grow scallops. Yet there are only a few growers who are pursuing growing farmed scallops at commercial levels. The biotoxin testing costs (currently covered by the grower) are limiting others from pursuing the sale of whole live scallops.

Farmed scallops are a shining example of a truly sustainable fishery and the opportunity to build this industry is here in front of you all today. I urge your support with this modest request to create a pilot program under the direction of the Department of Marine Resources to help facilitate a biotoxin testing program that includes covering the testing costs of farmed sea scallops grown on lease sites.

Sincerely,

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