

To the Marine Resource Committee, LD 1991, Feb 5, 2026, Shep Erhart

Good morning members of the MRC. Some of you may already know that more than a decade ago, the DMR initiated a multi-year, multi- stakeholder process of crafting a Rockweed Fisheries Management Plan, finally approved by the legislature in 2014. Section 12 – 5 of that plan recommended implementing some kind of harvester training and referenced DMR's already existing non-commercial lobster/crab license exam as an example.

Unfortunately, this Rockweed Management Plan was never fully implemented due to legal uncertainties of seaweed ownership in the intertidal. Nevertheless, now is the time to act on this harvester test recommendation and the reasons are as valid now as then: more informed harvesters are more responsible harvesters. I won't belabor this obvious point but talk more about the proposed test

Based on the existing format for DMR's non-commercial lobster/crab license, the open book test will consist of 10-12 multiple choice questions, taken on-line at the harvester's convenience. These questions will be pulled from a compilation of relevant educational material, accessible on-line or downloadable. Both the test questions and the source material for the test will be vetted by the DMR and the Seaweed Fisheries Advisory Council, which is open to public input. Once in place, this test should not inhibit harvester entry nor prove unmanageable for limited DMR resources.

As a member of the Maine Seaweed Council that has been advocating for more responsible seaweed regulations for 35 years, I encourage you to recommend passage of this bill unanimously. Although it may not be the ultimate harvester training tool, it's a significant step in the right direction. And although initially it will only apply to rockweed harvesters, the law is written so that eventually all commercial seaweed licenses may require some kind of testing prerequisite. It's time. Please recommend this bill to pass. Thank you.