

29 March 2021

Honorable chairs and other members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I am a marine biologist. I live in Pembroke on Cobscook Bay and am frequently out on the shoreline doing intertidal research or, as a volunteer, monitoring the shoreline and woods of the 191 acre Reversing Falls Preserve on Cobscook Bay. I keep a garbage bag in my car for trash collected from these places. Often balloons and their deadly ribbons are in my trash bag. Because of the deadly impact of balloons on wildlife and the way they litter and reduce the public's enjoyment of what should be clean public wild spaces, such as coastal state parks, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 618.

1. It's a national marine debris issue:

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Dept of Commerce) says: Balloons are a "type of marine debris that many people don't think about." and "Balloon debris can even have an economic impact on communities, contributing to dirty beaches which drive away tourists...Balloon debris is a national issue..."

<https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/hold-those-balloons-they-could-end-ocean.html>

2. And it's definitely a Gulf of Maine issue.

The Natural Resources Council of Maine says on their "balloon" debris page (<https://www.nrcm.org/programs/sustainability/sustainable-maine-community-toolkits/balloon-litter-prevention-toolkit/>) that "balloons cause more deaths in seabirds than any other kind of marine debris" and "balloons have been the most-recorded debris item floating in Jeffrey's Ledge Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Maine for at least 11 years..." and "In 2018 alone, the [Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation](#) of Portsmouth, NH found over 750 balloons littering the Gulf of Maine during their litter clean up events."

A researcher spending one week in 2012 on Metinic Island, 7 miles offshore in Knox County, found 3 mylar balloons (still inflated) and 5 latex balloons with plastic ribbon at least 10 yards inland.

<https://mainecoastislands.org/mci-islands/metinic-island/>

It's a no-brainer that these balloons are litter. They are littering our Gulf of Maine, they kill wildlife, and after they wash up, they reduce public enjoyment of our wild coastal spaces on the shore. Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 618 - An Act Regarding the Outdoor Release or Abandonment of Balloons.

Robin Hadlock Seeley, Ph.D.
292 Leighton Point Road
Pembroke, ME 04666