



MAINE & CO.

**131st MAINE LEGISLATURE
THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES**

Re: Testimony in Opposition to LD 508

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and distinguished members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Peter DelGreco, President & CEO of Maine & Co. My organization exists to find growing companies and show them how they can be successful in establishing an operation in Maine. Created during the administration of Governor Angus King, we are a privately funded 501(c)6. We compete with states from the entire country and countries around the world to attract new jobs and investment to Maine. We also work with existing Maine companies, helping them implement their growth plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to share why I oppose LD 508.

The bill establishes a working group comprised of multiple (17) “stakeholders” only two of which come from aquaculture. It is designed to ensure the regulated community (aquaculture) is in the minority and discriminated against in the process. Imagine proposing a working group to examine how the lobster community is regulated with 17 members only two of which come from the lobster fishery.

Perhaps more importantly, creating a working group like this is an attempt to remove the influence of science and scientists. This working group will turn fact-based scientific decision making into a political fight. Nobody can be in favor of politicizing our natural resources. Removing the authority and influence of DEP’s scientists in favor of a political body will lead to delays, a coarsening of our discourse, and poor decision making. Radicals against aquaculture may want those results, but those results will lead to a harming of our natural resources.

Anyone who has gone through the DEP process knows how rigorous it is. The scientists at DEP are incredibly knowledgeable and trained. They have studied the science for years and have worked a long time to understand the impacts of various activities on Maine’s environment. People who criticize the process are typically frustrated that they did not get the results they wanted. Their criticisms are usually that their vacation may be temporarily impacted. However, if the science is correct and there is no political influence, the results should be allowed to stand.

Our experience has been that opposition groups do not care about science and standards. It is just the opposite: they want to stifle development that meets the scientific standards. They want to usurp the authority of the scientists and professionals at DEP by turning the process into political one. Upon reading the text of the amendment to LD 508, I can only conclude that this is the intent of the legislation.

The State of Maine has an extraordinarily rigorous process for permitting. It is long and detailed. It is a gauntlet to be sure. No one gets a free pass. Bad projects get rejected. Good projects can make it through after a lot of time and expense. Some bad projects can become good projects with changes and adjustments based on science and new technology. Inserting a political committee to the middle of this process only serves to make a difficult process messy. In order to maintain Maine's environmental standards, we cannot reduce the influence of the scientists.

Thank you again and I urge this committee to oppose LD 508.