

Tom Sorby  
Lamoine  
LD 508

Senator Stacy Brenner, Representative Lori Gramlich and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, , thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

I'm Tom Sorby, Operations Manager for Kingfish Maine. I've been raising multiple species of fish in several countries over the last 15 years. I earned my Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology and Chemistry from Sparsholt College, Hampshire UK. And I also have my Master of Science in Sustainable Aquaculture from Stirling College.

I am speaking in opposition to LD 508.

In Maine, the current permitting process is extremely robust and stringent, and this applies not only to land-based aquaculture but also to off-shore aquaculture. At present, it can take years to permit a project due to the numerous agencies involved that review and comment on the applications. The current permitting process already looks into any potential environmental impacts, which is inclusive of costal marine water quality and habitat.

It seems rather odd that the aquaculture industry is vastly underrepresented in the suggested working group composition. Of the 17 suggested members of the working group, only 2 would have any aquaculture experience. Of those 2, only one would be an individual actively working in the industry and there would be no representation from anyone with large (greater than 50 acres) lease holdings. Why is the aquaculture industry vastly underrepresented?

The latest amendment to the bill changes the scope of the bill to focus "on-water net pen finfish aquaculture". Therefore, surely the committee should include representation from current net-pen finfish farming operations.

In addition, opponents to aquaculture projects already claim that the agencies that review the permitting process are understaffed and not able to adequately review the applications already in front of them. Why then, would you want to divert valuable resources away from these agencies to review the already robust environmental permitting laws.

Perhaps it would be prudent for the committee to pass legislation to further fund the DEP and DMR to increase staff numbers and strengthen the departments.

I implore the committee to trust the existing system and not waste time and money on the formation of a committee to answer a question that is already well defined.