

Nickie Sekera
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LD 1286

Greetings Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the IDEA Committee,

My name is Nickie Sekera and I am a resident of Fryeburg and I was appointed to the recent State Commission to Study the Role of Water as a Resource In Maine.

I am testifying to oppose LD 1286 "Resolve, to Establish the Blue Economy Task Force to Support Maine's Emergence as a Center for Blue Economy Innovation and Opportunity in the 21st Century".

This bill is potentially very dangerous and should be tabled, as we don't have the legal infrastructure in place to protect our rural communities from this kind of development at present. Where the Maine State Legislature has not moved to replace the "Absolute Dominion" or "Absolute Capture" doctrine in exchange for a better suited one, this gives the private sector a significant legal advantage over local communities' public water sources and the environment we depend upon for our health, cultural identity, localized sustainable economies, and survival.

Land based industrial-scale aquaculture can require a tremendous amount of groundwater and creates a waste stream that our quickly warming ocean and surface waters should not be further burdened with at this time.

The 1999 Maddocks vs. Giles court ruling, upholding "absolute dominion" was based upon the inaction of the Maine legislature regarding groundwater protection at that time. There still has been no action to date to replace this doctrine, and Maine is one of only a few states remaining that holds on to this outdated law.

Additionally notable is the Maine Supreme Court Case Law (Taylor v. PUC - PUC 15-89 - 5.12.16) ruled that the MPUC does not have the authority to consider impacts beyond the immediate ones to a facility when approving long-term contractual agreements for bulk water extraction.

We are living in a dark time where venture capital is putting great pressure on us to grow fish on land on a massive scale, instead of bringing our inland waterways and oceans back to good health to produce water based food sources in its natural setting. Our political will to protect our rivers, lakes, streams and ocean threaten to be further diminished in developing this alternative at a scale that appears incongruent with a sustainable decentralized food system. Private equity is currently the culprit of skyrocketing food prices and they already have their hands on our groundwater with little in our regulatory system in place to protect us from the exploits of Wall Street speculative enterprises, where water hangs in the balance. I hope you will consider the article recently published in the Wall Street Journal on April 9, 2023: "Private Equity's Food Binge Goes Sour -Firms snapped up food and beverage companies using bundles of debt before interest rates started rising".

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/private-equitys-food-binge-goes-sour-8f830dd4>

I hope that the Legislature will take pause and consider this, as the emerging PFAS ("forever chemicals") contamination, metallic mining pressures, an increase of bottled water exports, and an increase in the privatization of municipal water systems all add up to threaten a perfect storm for Wall Street speculators to gain control of groundwater in Maine. Let's not allow this "blue economy" be the "black and blue" punch to our eyes that blinds us. Wall Street and their investors are out to control the remainder of freshwater sources on the planet for private gain through "water futures", setting our rural communities up to compete with deep-pocketed interests over who will get priority access to the water sources which sustain all life.

Please put a pause on the creation of the Task Force until we can create a legal infrastructure that will protect our precious water sources, if not for us, for our future generations.

Thank you,

Nickie Sekera
Fryeburg, ME
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