

Committee Hearing on LD 114: An Act to Address Airboat Operations

Written testimony of Ford Reiche, 54 Bartol Island Rd, Freeport, Maine

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to LD 114.

It is a mistake to think that LD 114 is about protecting a working waterfront.

This is about protecting an airboat loophole that permits this handful of operators to be louder than any other boats on Maine waters, including louder than lobster boats and other commercial fishing vessels.

Also, this is not about protecting the commercial clammers. So far in this long process, no commercial clammers without airboats have submitted testimony in favor of this bill or in favor of protecting this handful of airboat operators.

For some reason, the Dept of IFW has been showing an imbalanced favoritism to airboat operators, at the expense of Maine's natural environment. After conducting their research into this issue in 2020, DIFW's proposal was to allow airboats, just airboats, to operate at 100 decibels, which would have been the loudest boat noise regulation in America. Our nationally recognized noise consultant characterized that proposal as ridiculous. DIFW eventually changed their proposal, but LD 114 still would allow noise levels which are excessive.

This is a loophole that allows just airboats to make a level of noise which is an unreasonable disturbance to wildlife, sensitive environmental areas, and densely populated communities. Since these conditions are so variable from town to town, perhaps it makes sense for the legislature to allow towns to have their own sound limits for all watercraft when essential for protection of sensitive environmental areas and areas of dense population.

This letter is in opposition to LD 114, but the competing proposal in LD 89 is more reasonable.

Thank you for giving this your consideration, and for your service to the State of Maine.

Ford Reiche
Freeport

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