

Steve Whitworth
Brunswick

Honorable members of the Inland Fisheries & Wildlife committee,

Please allow me to share how we experience airboat noise in our daily lives as residents along Maquoit Bay in Brunswick. To be sure, the thunderous mechanical intrusion of airboats has surged dramatically over the past two decades and the cumulative impact is tangible with every tide.

Harvesters can arrive to the landing with their trailers long before sunrise to take advantage of early morning low tides, queuing up to ramps, socializing and revving boat engines sometimes as early as 3:45AM. The early morning assembly of dozens of trucks & people in these predawn hours is disturbing enough, but once the airboats themselves fire up and rev, there's literally nowhere to hide. All of us in the area - school kids, hard working 9-5r's, the ill, retirees, regular exhausted mom & dads - are blown from beds in these dark hours, day after day, with revs and prop wash so startlingly loud and resounding that sleep isn't possible. And these aren't singular, 30-second events as I hear them regularly characterized. Waves of airboats push hundreds of horsepower each, drive 5-7 foot props & gun thousands of rpm, launching one after the other for more than an hour. Then they do it again when they return. Given a favorable tide schedule, airboats can roar in or out of our bay four times a day.

We currently have 8 - 12 airboats regularly departing & returning to Brunswick's Wharton Point to work the flats, more than I have ever seen previously in my 22 years living here, and a number I would have considered absurd just a few years ago. Living nearby, we physically experience the intrusion of every single airboat landing & departure at all times of day and night. On a daily basis, we could argue that airboats turn this placid section of the mid-coast ecosystem into the single loudest, least hospitable place in Maine - two to four times a day. It is impactful, stressful and exhausting.

Nature, too, has become so noticeably exhausted by these machines that shorebirds and waterfowl, already skittish guests and residents that depend on Maquoit Bay for their very livelihoods, have all but given up on it. Over the last 15+ years, once huge rafts of thousands of waterfowl seeking the safety of this protected bay have all but disappeared. No longer do shorebirds in significant numbers trust Maquoit Bay enough to feed, roost or even rest here. It's too dangerous, too frighteningly disturbed, day after day, tide after tide. Airboat noise has done this.

To be clear, we don't blame the hard working harvesters in any way - they're doing their jobs and following the rules. The problem is the lack of substance in rules themselves.

Airboat noise and operating hours are destroying the peace and sanctuary of our waterways, of the places we call home. It's getting worse every season and it's beyond time to address this. I can't tell you how important this is to our daily lives.

I oppose LD 114 (allowing up to 90 dbA), which is so loud. And I support LD 89 (80 dbA) or any bill with a decibel cap that is lower.

DIFW, we ask for your help to address airboat noise intrusion as a core social & environmental issue in our coastal regions.

Thank you for your consideration and for accepting public comments.
Best,

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