

James Balano
Wheeler's Bay Oyster Company
PO BOX 139
Spruce Head, ME 04859

11 April 2021

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight , and distinguished members of the Marine Resources Committee

My name is James Balano. My wife Robin McCoy and I are owners of the Wheeler's Bay Oyster Company in St. George. We oppose LD 1146.

Wealthy interests are trying to shut down aquaculture. They don't want to look at a working waterfront. Among other things it is about inflating the price of coastal real estate. A corollary to that is an astronomical increase in property taxes which would eventually drive even prosperous fishermen off the waterfront. They have the resources to sit back while others do their dirty work. Their 'hired guns' in the fields of lobbying and public relations have recruited a few '***plastic***' fishermen to lend credence to the myth that they seek to protect Maine's coastal heritage. You know who I'm talking about. They are not the serious fishermen. They are the ones you see standing around being quaint - the '***Bert and I Caricatures***'. The ones who have failed at everything else and decided to become '***Characters***'.

You can always smell something dishonest when you get a whiff of Public Relations 101 jargon. The words ***Protect, Heritage, Iconic, Historic, Sacred, Quintessential*** always appear in screeds meant to defraud. These are memes that elicit strong emotions in support of what are always lies. The deep pockets behind this swindle could care less about the lives of working fishermen or protecting the coast. It's about becoming wealthier and creating elite enclaves where former inhabitants can no longer afford to live and commute every day to work as servants. It's happening all over the country as depicted in the TV series, '***Yellowstone***'. It is happening in Vermont where people who have made fortunes fouling their own nests have moved. The first thing they do is run for selectman or planning board in order to zone out farms that smell like farms.

My sister-in-law had a place on Wheeler's Bay in St. George that looked out on a harbor of 17 lobster boats. She decided to find something more manageable as she got older. Her first real estate broker informed her that her house would be more valuable if it looked out on a harbor filled with yachts. Astonished at this boorish mentality she sent him packing. But this crass way of thinking has become

a scourge. It has nothing to do with protecting things of beauty. It is about conspicuous consumption and who has the most money.

Aquaculture is about a sustainable fishery in one of the richest and most prolific marine environments in the world. It is about the livelihoods of Maine people for generations to come.

It is absurd to suggest that fishing and aquaculture are in competition. They complement one another. The various aquaculture activities on the St. George peninsula are all owned and operated by active or retired fishermen. One can argue that lobstering itself is an aquaculture project. It takes 6 to 8 years for lobsters to reach market size of 1 Lb. Meanwhile you feed them thousands of metric tons of protein and teach them how to get in and out of traps. You also have specific territories codified by written and unwritten law.

If LD 1146 passes it is a foot in the door for telling fishermen they can't start their boat engine at 3AM because of the noise or stack their gear where it can be seen.

LD 1146 will eventually nullify all the work I've done to develop a business.

Maine DMR with input from MMA has developed the best aquaculture rules in the country. LD 1146 would destroy that. It is a process that doesn't require fixing or more study groups. It's already extremely difficult to get an aquaculture lease.

The LD 1146 revocation of aquaculture exemption to NURPA and site development law is a Trojan Horse that will create so many 'Catch 22's' that people will give up and go away. It is designed to obstruct and has nothing to do with improvement.

LD 1146 would destroy the flexibility of the current system that has a place for all size players from the hobbyist to the multi-employee corporation. It fosters growth of marine products in a range of markets from the individual to international – from the Farmer's Market to Fulton Fish Market.

MAA has always sought to find constructive solutions that address real concerns while allowing Maine aquaculture businesses to grow. For these reasons we oppose LD 1146. Thank you.

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