

Rachel Bishop  
Maine Aquaculture Association

My name is Rachel Bishop. I am a second year kelp farmer located on Frenchboro, Hancock County. I participated in Island Institute's final Aquaculture Business Development cohort in 2019, and started kelp farming in 2019 on LPAs with two 400ft kelp lines. I have worked diligently in the past two seasons to responsibly expand my farm, utilizing the four LPAs allowed, and growing all four lines in the 2020-21 season.

I oppose LD 1146 because I believe strongly that aquaculture farming is the next best step for lobster fishing families like mine, that are being put at imminent risk by whale take reduction regulations. I have grown my farm as far as the LPA structure allows, utilizing all four available LPAs. The next growth step in aquaculture is the lease process. Due to their inherent equipment used to grow product, other aquaculture species have the ability to expand their farm within the LPA structure, but kelp is limited by the fact that it grows on horizontal lines, and only 400 square feet space is allowed on an LPA. To grow enough kelp to make my farm profitable, I need to grow much more than 1600ft of line.

The current leasing and management system for aquaculture leasing is already quite stringent and tough to navigate. Making the system even more onerous would definitely discourage farmers from even attempting the expansion. Extensive research goes into selecting an aquaculture site, both from scientific and logistic perspectives. To add visual impact and alternative site studies to the requirements is entirely unnecessary. Aquaculture farmers are already some of the most environmentally proactive people I know. Adding these requirements to the law does nothing to further the industry and everything to curtail it.

LD 1146 would serve to curb the growth of a diverse and vitally important sector of Maine's marine industry and further weaken the aquaculture sector, as well as Maine's working waterfronts. I support MAA and their efforts to find constructive solutions to address concerns relating to the lease application process, while allowing Maine aquaculture businesses to grow into profitable entities.