

Greetings Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight, and honorable members of the Marine Resources Committee. My name is Bailey Bowden and I am from the town of Penobscot. I write today to voice my support for LD 1146.

I fully support the concept of small scale aquaculture projects, the type of projects that were originally intended to allow fishermen the opportunity to diversify their income...but aquaculture has exploded from a mom and pop side job into the complete industrial development of our shared marine waters with no plan for the future.

There is no fishery management plan for aquaculture. Where is the Department's road map for the future of this industry? Where are the Best Management Practices (BMP's) to help guide amateur farmers through the growing process? What are the goals of the program? What is the saturation point for the density of aquaculture projects on any given waterway?

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) lacks the capacity to enforce the existing rules with the current number of lease holders and the number of leases continues to climb at an astronomical pace. It has been stated that nearly 95% of lease applications have been approved. This should be obvious as the Legislature voted to change the law and allow DMR to promote aquaculture. Laws and rules have been made or changed that have given the aquaculture industry an unfair advantage over other existing fisheries.

The ultimate decision to grant a lease or not needs to be made by an independent entity that does not report to the Commissioner of DMR.

Current biosecurity measures are a joke and recent rule changes have made the movement of shellfish easier. A rule change dated 2/24/2021 confirms the spread of an oyster disease, known as MSX, into Quahog Bay, Harpswell. The spread of these pathogens is due to the inability of DMR to control the unfettered movement of shellfish along our coast by aquaculturists.

The marine waters of our state are a public resource, and currently certain stakeholders are being left out of the process regarding how to properly manage this shared resource.

Perhaps it is time to re-visit the 2004 Bay Management Bill where DMR and the State Planning Office combined forces to evaluate the potential for regional management of coastal waters.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these comments.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bailey Bowden

Penobscot Maine

