

Robert "Pat" Burns  
Georgetown Aquaculture, LLC and Georgetown Island Oyster Coop

I am the founder of Georgetown Aquaculture LLC as well as the first shellfish Coop in Maine. I am speaking on behalf of 11 oyster farmers in Robinhood Cove. We are a diverse group of lobstermen/women, clammers and ground fishermen who have started aqua farming in response to the negative affects of climate change on our traditional means of income. The decline of the various shellfish harvests and the threat of declining lobstering because of the fastest warming ocean body in the world has caused us to pursue aqua farming as a sustainable livelihood to replace the continuing decline of our traditional fishery.

Aqua farming represents a small fraction of the area currently occupied by other harvesting enterprises and should not be limited as there is very little interference with lobstering or ground fishing .

Aqua farms are generally small family operated businesses that will be passed down to family members. This transfer of ownership is a traditional method of maintaining a family enterprise and should not be limited.... just as any other business in Maine is not prevented from passing to our sons and daughters. Nor, should an owner decide to sell his or her business to a new owner, should they be prevented from selling their own business to a new proprietor as with any business in Maine.

The purpose of this bill is disingenuous and harms the ability of our fisher men and women to develop a sustainable living to offset the negative affects of global warming on clamming, lobstering and ground fishing. Aqua farming will allow our farmers to remain in our small towns, preserve our schools, vol. fire depts., community centers and other social services that are now under threat because of the loss of traditional harvesting leading to the migration of our villagers out of our town to find work in other locations.

Aqua farming is the key to stabilizing our marine economy and preserving our fishing communities for the future.

Thank you for your vote against this short sighted and injurious bill.

Robert,"Pat" Burns, Georgetown Aquaculture LLC