

Julie Eaton
Deer Isle

4/13/2021

Senator Dave Miramant- Chair, Representative Jay McCreight- Chair and
Distinguished Members of the Marine Resources Committee,

My name is Julie Eaton, and I am a Stonington lobster boat Captain with 38 years of experience earning my living from the sea and a member of the Maine Lobstering Union. I am submitting this testimony in SUPPORT of L.D. 1146-An Act to Protect Maine's Ocean Waters and Support Regulatory Oversight and the Long-term Health of the Aquaculture Industry.

The Maine Lobster industry is one of the most regulated, sustainable industries in the country and dare I say probably in the world. We got there through much insight and fight to ensure that our industry would be one we could pass on for generations. It only follows that if the aquaculture industry in Maine is to survive & thrive long term, they should be taking a page from our book.

When aquaculture was first presented to the Maine lobstermen it was as a small-scale way for fishermen to diversify into another fishery and to supplement their income. However, it has grown into something else entirely now. We are desperate for some oversight and regulation in the Aquaculture industry.

The potential for a single entity to hold 1000 acres of marine bottom is just too much! With the potential loss of bottom from the closure NOAA is discussing to make Maine fulfill the required reduction percentage concerning the Right Whale, Maine Lobstermen who have historically fished in this closure area will be forced to fish inside. Leases are taking up bottom all over the State now. Bigger leases are moving in. Combine this with the potential loss of fishable bottom caused by the offshore windmills and the Maine lobstermen are just squeezed too tightly. Even the aquaculturists I have spoken with think that 1000 acres is too much!!! I think that Representative Alley's limit of 100 acres is a good one! I also think that there should be a limited number of leases in each area so there is some form of control on the volume of leases quite like there are trap limits and limited licenses for lobstermen in each zone.

Just like the lobster industry is by resident owner/ operator, this same standard should apply to aquaculture thus ensuring industrialization of our ocean does not occur. Maine waters should be for Maine people!

The other issue I would like to address is the fact that DMR needs to return to having divers inspect the ocean bottom under the net pens and aquaculture sites. As a commercial diver, many years ago I took a job cleaning out the dead salmon from pens and patching the netting of the pens located just outside of Sorrento, Maine. I did the patching from outside the pens and the bottom was literally a ghostly white from rot and waste. Nothing lived there. Now, you might say fish poop in the ocean, and you would be right. However, think of it this way... If a human uses the bathroom in the woods because they get caught short, it is nasty and not cool. If thousands of humans do this in the same place, it is a definite health issue!!! Well, there are thousands of salmon in these pens doing their business!! It is a health issue for our ocean!!! Sea creatures excrete waste. The ocean bottom needs to be examined. I would encourage funding be found for DMR to continue this work and that they should be equipped with underwater cameras to document this work.

Thank you for your time and attention to this especially important issue! Our oceans must remain healthy!!! The survival of our coastal communities depends on this!!

Respectfully,

Captain Julie Eaton
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