

Kelsey Fenwick
Port Clyde

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

My name is Kelsey Fenwick

I am writing in support of LD-1146, an Act to Protect Maine's ocean waters and support regulatory oversight and the long-term health of the Aquaculture industry. As a sternman fishing from Freeport to Tenants Harbor, I have seen the recent influx in aquaculture leases throughout the state. I have experienced first hand losing valuable fishing grounds to approved aquaculture leases, even though dozens of citizens spoke out against the proposed lease location. Lobstermen pay for trap tags and license fees and are restricted to their designated zones, yet they are losing bottom and fishing area due to large aquaculture leases. Fishing and aquaculture can coexist, but it will take strong leadership and citizen involvement so all parties have a voice in the process. Displacing a large group of fishermen to replace with a few aquaculture farmers doesn't make sense.

I sincerely hope the state of Maine will live up to the public trust doctrine, which asserts that the state holds land lying beneath navigable waters as a trustee of a public trust for the benefit of its citizens. Returning expired leases, as proposed in LD 1146 back to the state of Maine is one way the state can demonstrate their adherence to the public trust doctrine. The future and sustainability of aquaculture in Maine is yet to be seen, but by DMR approving almost all lease applications, it doesn't seem sustainable. Industrialized aquaculture is limiting Maine's most valuable fishery, and taking the ocean out of the public domain.

I believe small scale aquaculture is a valuable asset to Maine if managed and regulated properly. Industrialized aquaculture is worrisome, as there are many negative impacts from large scale aquaculture, from disrupting marine and bird life to displacing fishermen, and limiting navigation. The current aquaculture legislation does not protect the Gulf of Maine from being leased and privatized by industrial aquaculturists. The size and scope of leases is too large. A lease size of 1000 acres for up to 20 years has the potential to exclude entire groups of fishermen and boaters from a formerly public resource. The current process of obtaining an aquaculture lease is flawed. The public (fishermen, recreational boaters, aquaculturists) need a better forum and process to collaborate and communicate with DMR.

Proper state regulations need to be in place to prevent rapid, unplanned expansion of aquaculture in Maine, and I believe LD-1146 is beneficial in ensuring the health of the Gulf of Maine. As the Gulf of Maine is a public resource, there needs to be more conversation and involvement WITH the public in regards to leasing OUR Maine waters. I hope the state of Maine protects our resources, fishing heritage and access to a public resource. LD 1146 is a step in the right direction, to expand aquaculture in a thoughtful, cautious way.

Please preserve the Gulf of Maine and our fishing heritage by prohibiting industrialized aquaculture.

Thank you,

Kelsey Fenwick
Port Clyde, Maine