

Dale "Chopper" Sawyer
Freeport

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight and members of the Marine Resources Committee. My name is Chopper Sawyer, and I am a fisherman. Right now, I am fishing for eels and I want to strongly support LD 1146.

I spoke publicly against an aquaculture lease in Recompense Bay in Freeport.

Like many people I talked about lease size, navigation and access to where I traditionally fished.

During that hearing I asked what the state's plan was overall for aquaculture. The Department of Marine Resources stated publicly – "There is no plan for aquaculture in the state of Maine."

That told me a lot and it should tell all of you a lot today.

Here's one of my main concerns:

A bunch of aquaculture leases are applied for by owner – operators – good Maine people who are our friends and neighbors on the water.

Larger corporations see how easy it is to get a lease in Maine and they start buying up the smaller leases through the transfer process.

I am sure this committee knows you can transfer an aquaculture lease without a public hearing.

Soon the Mainer who makes his or her living with small aquaculture is out of business and what we have is the equivalent of Walmart owning the Maine coast.

Sure, that's good for those who own stock – how is it going for the rest of America?

Is that what this committee wants? Walmart on the water?

By keeping lease sizes at a total of 1,000 acres there is no question this is where we are heading.

You don't have to look further than your own hand to see what's going on.

It's time for a statewide conversation that involves all parties.

Thank you.