

Good Morning

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight and distinguished members of the Marine Resource Committee

My name is Paul Anderson. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries, a non-profit organization based in Stonington Maine.

I wish to provide comment regarding LD 1211. My comments are neither for nor against this legislation, but I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments for your consideration as you weigh the merits of this bill.

The mission of the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries is to help sustain fisheries and fishing communities in eastern Maine and beyond. We consider ourselves to be a science-based organization and we conduct programs in collaborative fisheries research, collaborative management, and collaborative education. We believe that an engaged citizenry, sharing and co-generating knowledge that observes and understands challenges as change happens will have the best chance of being resilient to those challenges and to respond in a way that creates opportunity. As you know, there are a plethora of challenges facing our coastal communities right now and government should not bear all of this responsibility alone.

A question that I have often contemplated in my career is how far can we devolve regulatory authority towards communities? In the cascade of federal, state, county and municipal governments, where does the responsibility for maintaining the public trust lie and can communities and citizens bear some of that responsibility?

I bring to this discussion a bit of history on similar approaches in the past. Prior to my current position I worked for the University of Maine serving as the Director of the Maine Sea Grant College Program. In 2003 I had the privilege of chairing the Governor's Task Force on the Planning and Development of Aquaculture in Maine. You may have heard about this task force that conducted a study over several months resulting in nearly 100 recommendations many of which were incorporated into policy. One of those recommendations was to form a Bay Management Study Group. I also served on that group. Over the course of several years, we tested the potential for local, regional scale management in a few pilot areas. There were some lessons learned and ultimately, working with DMR staff, we determined that there were not sufficient resources to manage at those scales. We lacked sufficient information and there were not resources to collect and manage the information, the engagement required for localized management was burdensome and the enforcement could not be adequate at those scales with current resources.

This bill reminds me of that work and proposes bioregional approach to managing the natural resources. That, on the surface, has merit as we strive to take an ecosystem approach to natural resource and fisheries management. Understanding how watersheds work and the connection to the sea is very important, particularly

with so much change happening in the ecosystem. This bioregional approach applied to the social and economic elements is even more complex. The challenges that emerge through public engagement and politics makes the policy development very difficult. That's probably why we have government.

A study group to look at history here in Maine and other models for alternative governance systems will uncover these and many other factors. It may prove to be untenable or even unlawful to set up alternative jurisdictional authorities that are already assigned to agencies. The study may also discover approaches to current governance that allow for more inclusion of local voices and concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this proposed legislation.

Paul Anderson
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