

Antonia Small  
PORT CLYDE

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Dear Distinguished Members of the Marine Resource Committee,

We are writing today in OPPOSITION to LD 1211.

We own a small, relatively new, oyster farm in Port Clyde, Maine. We would like to add our voices to the rejection that the current system is somehow insufficient or broken, or, that yet another commission needs to look at reforming the way leases for aquaculture are approved. We have found the current leasing system to be thorough, rigorous, yet supportive of folks looking to earn a living on the coast of Maine.

Not only do we find LD 1211 redundant, but disingenuous. More and more studies are pointing to the benefits of seaweed farms, oyster farms, mussel farms for the benefits they provide not just to our local waters, in the case of the filter feeders, but in the carbon sinking benefits of seaweed farms for a global improvement of air quality and mitigating climate change.

We need more staff at the Department of Marine Resources, helping to support the projects currently in the pipeline and waiting. Another commission, made up of people mostly outside the industry does little to create a sense of confidence that this is, in fact, meant to “balance development and conservation.” It sounds like a commission designed to close the door on one of the world’s more urgent and burgeoning industries, while keeping wealthy waterfront homeowners happy.

The work of building a sea farm is rigorous from so many angles: permitting, planning, implementing, husbandry, boat and gear maintenance, fishing and neighbor relationships, financing, weather, crop health, staffing a seasonal workload, marketing, distribution, pandemics! No one goes into this endeavor without a lot of effort, time and investment.

Keeping the leasing process a part of a state agency ensures that there is a fair and equitable due process for farmers up and down the coast. The creation of regional management sounds like yet another form of gatekeeping designed to protect the gentrification of the coast and pushes the sea farmer toward losing all we do to both feed people and contribute to mitigating climate change.

We support the current efforts of the Department of Marine Resources, the Maine Aquaculture Association, and all of those who have gone before us developing the aquaculture industry here in Maine. The constructive solutions are inherent in the current process as it stands today. Please take care in creating more barriers to an industry we’ll need to feed our people, and protect the planet, in the 21st century.

Sincerely,  
Antonia Small + John E. Cotton  
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