

Testimony submitted to the Marine Resources Committee by David Porter, Ph.D.  
on the subject of LD 2003

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler and Honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is **David Porter**. I am a Brooklin resident, a retired University of Georgia Botany professor and co-founder of the **Blue Hill Peninsula Rockweed Forum**, a group that advocates for the conservation of rockweed and provides educational resources and field experiences focused on its ecology and service to the marine environment.

I am quite familiar with the rockweed forest that blankets our rocky coast, having spent nearly every summer of my life on the shores of Penobscot Bay. In fact, my professional academic research career in marine microbial ecology started right there.

Today, I want to urge you to **oppose LD 2003** which, in my opinion, would lead to a severely altered and degraded rockweed forest.

We refer to this seaweed community as a forest because at high tide when the rockweed is buoyed up by the many gas-filled bladders on their branches, it creates a six-foot tall seaweed jungle sheltering more than a hundred different types of juvenile fish, shellfish, and other invertebrates. I like to compare this intertidal forest to the shoreline forest of spruce and fir that harbors and nurtures so many birds and other animals. The terrestrial forest is obvious, but we tend not to see the intertidal forest. Also, it's easy to miss the commercial harvesters who come and cut the rockweed to sell it for fertilizer and other products. In our area, a commercial company from Canada is actively harvesting tons of rockweed.

You might wonder why we are concerned with conservation of rockweed. After all, more than 90% of the intertidal seaweed is rockweed. But because it is very slow growing perennial seaweed (at only 3-4 inches per year) it may take more than ten years for it to grow to form a mature canopy from a young or cut off branch. So, if rockweed is harvested repeatedly, it struggles to come back, if ever, to its mature forest state.

It has been clearly documented that the natural rockweed forest provides food and shelter for many species of marine creatures both as a protective blanket at low tide and as a dramatic forest at high tide sheltering a whole range of

commercially important species (lobsters, clams, periwinkles, cod, haddock, pollock and others).

Rockweed is beneficial not only alive and attached to rocks, but also when storm tossed and detached when it continues in the marine food web as food on the ocean floor and when drifting or washed onto beaches where amphipods (beach fleas) and other small creatures create a feast for shore birds, seabirds, herons, and ducks. It's no secret that ecologists refer to rockweed as a keystone species, the loss of which would collapse the whole intertidal ecosystem.

For these and numerous other reasons, I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 2003.

Thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony.

David Porter, Ph.D.

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