

TESTIMONY OF
Robin Hadlock Seeley
Town of Pembroke

In opposition to LD 2065: An Act to Amend Maine's Aquaculture Leasing Laws
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
Sponsored by Rep. Hepler
Public Hearing, 1 Feb 2024

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources:

My name is Robin Hadlock Seeley, I live in Pembroke on Cobscook Bay, I am a marine scientist and I am testifying in opposition to LD 2065, an Act to Amend Maine's Aquaculture Leasing Laws.

LD 2065 seems to be trying to solve a problem with the aquaculture leasing process. I am guessing that the Department of Marine Resources is trying to streamline the process by raising the threshold for holding a hearing from 5 people who request such a hearing to 25 people who request a hearing. So DMR holds fewer hearings. But raising the threshold 500% is a bad idea and has the appearance of wanting to reduce public input.

Surely there must be other ways to solve the problem. If it is a problem of backlogged applications and not enough staff to process applications, fund more positions at DMR. A lot of resources, attention and money are going toward aquaculture in Maine - surely enough money can be found to fund the aquaculture lease program adequately and prevent bottlenecks and streamline the process. Raising the required number from 5 to 25 is the wrong way to streamline, in my opinion.

If funds can't be found to staff DMR adequately in the general budget, then I suggest setting lease application fees at a level that funds the staff necessary to process the applications. In other areas of government - (LUPC for example: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/lupc/laws_rules/rule_chapters/Ch01_ver2021.pdf) - they don't let applications bog down due to lack of resources. They charge project application fees at a level that funds the program staff needed.

My final, general comment is that I think the reason the public balks at having their chances at a hearing reduced by raising the requirement from 5 people requesting a hearing to 25 is because there is a lack of overall marine planning in our state. I want to urge you, our legislators, to find a way to create and support and fund a movement toward Marine Spatial Planning in our state.

"Marine Spatial Planning is a public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine environments to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives." <https://www.msp.wa.gov/>

If Maine had a process of Marine Spatial Planning, like the state of Washington or Massachusetts, then the public would already be weighing in, in an organized process, on the

problem of how to allocate human activities to the marine environment that achieves economic/ social and ecological goals. Not having to respond to problems of lease siting in a piecemeal fashion.

Robin Hadlock Seeley, Ph.D.
Leighton Pt Road
Pembroke, ME 04666