

My name is Nellie Brylewski. I am the General Manager for Muscongus Bay Aquaculture and Dodge Cove Marine Farm. I OPPOSE BILL LD64

Due to the basic biology of oysters, naturally occurring cultchless oysters are highly unlikely. It is more likely that unattached oysters found outside of lease/LPA space and gear are aquacultured oysters that have somehow moved/been moved off lease/LPA.

I see the proposed change likely causing increased conflict on the water, as harvesters, whether they hold a lease or not, will be incentivized to harvest oysters right up to the edge of any lease/LPA. Depending on weather, tides, currents and type of electronic equipment being used, lease boundaries can be challenging to determine, thus providing ample opportunity for perpetrators to claim lack of knowledge they are committing a crime.

The proposed change will mean that Marine Patrol will have to invest significant amounts of time, energy, and money surveilling lease sites to prevent poaching. Marine Patrol is already stretched thin and has often asked the grower community to support additional funding, which MAA has done repeatedly over the last twenty years. If Marine patrol does not consider that surveillance and poaching from lease sites a serious crime compared to other Marine resources issues, they will not spend the time and/or resources to investigate, creating a climate of enablement for poachers. Poachers will observe this and take the opportunity.

A huge concern for us all should be that poachers/non-leaseholders may not have the knowledge, or incentive, to comply with requirements designed to protect public health. Specifically, it is unlikely that a poacher is going to correctly identify the source of the oysters they are selling, so in the case of an illness, the ability to track back to the 'source' will be virtually impossible. This puts the entire oyster sector at risk.

I support and trust the Maine Aquaculture Association and their efforts to find constructive solutions that address agency concerns while allowing Maine aquaculture businesses to grow in a well-supported environment.