

Togue Brawn
Bath
LD 1352

Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler and members of the Marine Resources Committee:

My name is Togue Brawn, I am the owner of Downeast Dayboat and am a passionate advocate for Maine's scallop industry. I am currently a member of the New England Fishery Management Council, the Chair of Maine's Marine Resources Advisory Council, on the Board of Directors of the Maine Fishermen's Forum, co chair of the Maine Seafood Promotion Council and co chair of Maine's Seafood Economic Accelerator Program.

I am speaking against LD 1352. I am sorry not to be there in person, but I am currently on the road to Cutler to buy scallops from a fishermen fishing just outside Cutler in the northern most section of the Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Management Area. I will keep my testimony brief:

1.) If you prohibit the department from using a lottery to allow folks into the fishery, you'd better come up with another option, because they've been trying to come up with one for 15 years and have failed to find anything better than a lottery. I think it makes sense to hold a lottery of those who have completed the apprentice system to prevent people from speculatively entering their names. A lottery is like Democracy: it's not great except when compared to any other option.

2.) A one to one exit/entry ratio will not work in Maine's scallop fishery. The scallop resource is limited and cannot accommodate all license holders as it is. Those that leave the fishery are likely to be the least active, those that enter will be the most active. 1:1 entry exit ratio will increase fishing effort and make the fishery even more difficult to manage. I predict MORE in season closures if you add more active participants.

3.) The issue of divers getting "first crack" is a red herring. Divers harvest less than 5% of Maine sea scallops. Schedules are alternated because it makes for much safer fishing for both divers and draggers: draggers stir up the bottom, reducing visibility, and no one wants to have draggers and divers in close proximity. The fact that divers can get into areas "before" draggers is a matter of perspective - each fishery got a "first crack" at an area - each fishing type had to start out in one area, so it could be said that draggers get into an area two years before the divers do. Draggers don't like seeing divers get "first crack" at an area, but this is just an example of lots of passionate talk about fixing a problem, but when you look at it, there isn't actually a problem. What IS a problem is having divers fishing in low visibility water right next to thousand pound drags.

4.) Lastly, any rational, unbiased analysis of the rotational management system would classify it as an unqualified success. There are MORE fishermen harvesting MORE scallops, and even the average amount harvested per fishermen has increased, thanks to the system that allows scallops to recover between harvests. Fishermen always argue that they should be given more opportunity to take resources immediately, but scallops grow roughly 20% - 25% per year, so leaving them on the bottom almost invariably HELPS the fishermen in the long run. I actually wish the Department would close areas sooner, because it would result in MORE scallops being harvested in the long run. It is in fishermen's nature to take what they can today because there is no guarantee of tomorrow. I don't fault them for that. But it is fisheries managers' and legislators' responsibility to look at what the data shows you. Right now, draggers from North Carolina to Maine have flocked to Stellwagen Bank (off Gloucester) to take advantage of the ONE bright spot in the Federal fishery. Stellwagen Bank is in the southernmost part of the Northern Gulf of Maine scallop fishery, and the reason it's the one bright spot is that Maine's Council members have fought to keep fishing mortality low, to allow the resource to grow and rebuild and provide more economic opportunity to our vessels. Don't make the mistake of caving

in to fishermen who demand more access to take scallops today. If you manage them responsibly, patience will reward you with successful growth, and the fishermen will get more money in the end. We all want a brighter future for Maine's scallop fishery. You can help make that happen by voting against this bill.