LD 586

Why Passing "AN ACT TO PROTECT MAINE FISHERIES" Will Be Good for Maine

Land-based finfish aquaculture could be a dynamic new opportunity for the State of Maine. But, our regulations have not caught up with development pressures, threatening to degrade our environment and harm our coastal communities if left unchecked.

The Current Situation

In five years, Maine has seen five proposals for large-scale finfish facilities. If built, their cumulative impacts would degrade state waters. The current proposals would:

- Each require between 7 and 28 million of gallons of water use per day.
- Discharge millions of gallons of partially-treated waste into overburdened waterways —with nitrogen discharges equivalent to 19 Portland wastewater treatment plants.
- Threaten Maine's lobster, shellfish, fin fish and tourism industries that rely on clean, pathogen-free waters.
- Require new power corridors and place huge demands on water and electricity delivery infrastructure, increasing ratepayer costs
- Increase Maine's 2030 greenhouse gas emissions by 15%, making the targets set in the "Maine Won't Wait" Climate Action Plan more difficult.

Multiple citizen-groups have formed to halt these projects with administrative appeals and legal challenges. Similar facilities in other locations have experienced multiple mass-die offs, industrial accidents and citizen opposition. Zero-discharge facilities are being built that are the current best technology, that address many of the concerns listed above.

Several examples include Aquabanq, Inc in Wyoming (aquabanq.com), Springworks in Maine (springworksfarm.com), Sustainable Blue in Nova Scotia (sustainableblue.com) and Superior Fresh in Wisconsin (superiorfresh.com: producing salmon and vegetables).

SIERRA CLUB
MAINE CHAPTER

Proposed Legislation

The State can encourage good jobs and support local economies while also protecting Maine's magnificent coastline and marine resources. This act would provide specificity in a regulatory framework of "best practices" that address citizen concerns and provide businesses a transparent process. This bill says:

- Industrial recirculating aquaculture operations (RAS) may not contribute to the degradation of water quality or air quality or increase overall carbon emissions.
- Feed sources for RAS must be free of wild marine organisms, pollutants and contaminants as specified by the department by rule, including but not limited to wild finfish, wild krill, genetically modified ingredients, polychlorinated biphenyls and mercury.
- RAS may not adversely impact native lobster, shellfish, seaweed or finfish operations.

Passing this bill and initiating rulemaking would allow us to:

- Ensure our vital lobstering, shellfishing, ground fishing and elver fishing industries are preserved and protected—keeping our wild fishing waters free from further pollution and disease transmission.
- Enable a new working waterfront industry that does not require bottom land leasing.
- Make Maine a leader in zero-discharge land-based aquaculture, creating hundreds of good paying jobs and utilizing our universities, labs and high-tech incubators.
- Maintain and strengthen Maine's coastal resiliency from impacts of climate change by protecting eelgrass beds and saltmarshes.
- Ensure recirculating aquaculture systems do not impact native lobster, endangered Atlantic Salmon, shellfish, seaweed or eelgrass or other important habitats/fisheries.
- Protect plankton food sources for all wild fish and whales.
- Maintain healthy ecosystems, and protect plankton food sources for all wild fish and whales by ensuring feed sources are free of wild fin-fish, wild krill, genetically-modified ingredients and contaminants such as PCBs, mercury or other pollutants.
- Enforce the Clean Water Act's anti-degradation and best practicable technology rules and require that new aquaculture projects do not degrade air quality or add to the state's carbon emissions.
- Ensure millions of dollars spent on fishery restoration is not wasted.
- Limit the threat of toxic algae blooms and protect recreational resources and businesses.