

Friends of Penobscot Bay
www.penbay.net

Comments to the Marine Resources Committee

1/18/17

My Name is Ron Huber, I am executive director of Friends of Penobscot Bay, a Waterkeeper Affiliate. Since 1993, I have been involved in community oversight of pollution sites, coastal development, and as needed, advocate for the Penobscot Bay Environment to the Maine Board of Environmental Protection. I have both supported and helped block aquaculture initiatives in Penobscot Bay,

I am always glad to hear John Lewis and others from the lab in West Boothbay Harbor. and remember some impressive people of years past like John Hurst and John Sowles, two men who took water pollution and other environmental challenges seriously.

My guiding principle over the past twenty-odd years has been that the bay's commercial and recreational fisheries, and their cousins rely on having their biological needs met. These are clean water, healthy habitats, untainted mud harbor floors. Ditto for their prey. While we are all aware of great challenges like ocean acidification and global warming, the solutions to those are very slow in coming, even as they are implemented.

What I want the committee to do is turn its attention to the role that Maine DMR plays in protecting our local environment from inappropriate development, and learn from that agency the challenges its Environmental Coordinator faces doing so.

DMR's Environmental Coordinator goes to these sites, looks at them from a fishery perspective, reviews what data's available about the sites, and speaks with experts on the location, The Coordinator's result brief report is considered high quality information, and guides the state permitting agencies decisions.

But here's the problem: coastal development proposals and other projects are legion. They occur from one end of the Maine coast to the other, and up tidal reaches of rivers. It is physically impossible for a single person - part time at present, I believe - to give each new application the attention it should receive.

But it must be done. The legislature needs to increase the budget of Maine DMR's Environmental Coordinator, so that growth taking place along our coasts does not reach tipping points where the water quality is permanently reduced in this cove or that harbor, thence the commercial and recreational fisheries there dropping too.

Happily, there is an opportunity right now for Maine to gather sufficient federal funds to do this. The New England Fishery Management Council's Habitat Committee is meeting later this month to discuss protecting habitat. Mostly the offshore coral forests that are being listed as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, or HAPC.

Unlike those HAPCs, another one that is coming into play shortly extends along the entire New England coast, from the Piscataqua River to Passamaquoddy Bay. This protection area extends from the low tide line to 20 meters deep.

This Habitat Area is not being established to limit fisheries. It is being established to ensure that that these shallower waters, which are heavily used by the younger age classes of cod and other commercial finfish and lobsters and more, remain usable by them. Specifically by being protected from **land-based impacts of pollution and habitat degradation.**

We ask you to get DMR to seek funding through the New England Fishery Management Council and other sources in order to help implement this new Habitat Area of Particular Concern for Juvenile Atlantic Cod,

Thank you.
Ron Huber