

The Honorable Chellie Pingree

**U.S. House of Representatives
1st District of Maine**

**Before the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and
Wildlife Testimony on H.R. 2548, the Protect America's Working Waterfronts Act**

October 20, 2009

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for convening this hearing and thank you for having me here today. Your continued work on behalf of our nation's coastal resources has made a significant difference in so many communities across the country.

The economic and cultural heart of many coastal communities is the working waterfront. Working waterfronts are water dependent, coastal related businesses – businesses that depend on being able to have access to the water. A working waterfront helps to define a town and provides jobs to local residents. A working waterfront also brings visitors to the community, visitors who are drawn to the authentic experience of a working waterfront.

This is an issue many of you can relate to, I know that all of you from coastal – including the Great Lakes – have water dependent businesses in your state. We have all seen the waterfronts and harbors dominated by condos and residential development – what we don't see the fishermen, the boat builders, the marinas, and others who need to be able to get down to the water. We don't see them because they are not there.

These businesses have been squeezed into an ever-decreasing amount of space. Many of these businesses, once the backbone of our coastal communities have moved or gone out of business entirely! The conversion of working waterfronts to the mistakenly called “higher and better” residential uses, displaces fishermen and others, who depend on working waterfronts, causing economic and cultural devastation to the coastal community.

Not only do we all lose access to our coastal resources, our constituents lose their jobs. My bill will help protect these jobs, my bill will help protect our coastal communities.

In Maine, our coastal communities rely on working waterfronts. In fact, working waterfronts support our coastal economy and indeed, the economy of the entire state. Maine has 1.2 million residents and Maine's total GDP in 2007 was estimated to be \$48.1 billion. Maine's coastal economy contributes an estimated \$28.7 billion to the state GDP – nearly 60% of the state GDP. Maine's largest single site employer, Bath Iron Works employs over four thousand people on the shores of the Kennebec River and has been

and continues to be an important part of Maine's shipbuilding history and Maine's coastal economy.

Maine's coastline is over 3500 miles long, yet less than 20 miles support working waterfronts. These 20 miles support more than 35,000 jobs and bring in hundreds of millions of dollars. In Maine, the lobster industry requires access to the water, a place to unload traps, a place to tie up a dinghy, a place to land the lobsters. Without access to a working waterfront, many of Maine's lobstermen would not have a viable business model – the lobster industry has \$250 million worth of landings and indirectly contributes nearly \$1 billion to Maine's economy.

The pressures facing working waterfronts are real and I have seen these pressures first hand. We are not doing enough. We need a federal grants program to help states. Many states have already recognized the need to protect working waterfronts and now it is time for the federal government to recognize them too.

I have three short stories to share, that I think will help highlight the diversity of what a working waterfront is, as well as the common threats that are facing all working waterfronts.

In one small coastal Maine town, there are a growing number of shellfish farmers who grow oysters and mussels. Many of these farmers are the sons and daughters of commercial fishermen and aquaculture is the only way for them to continue on the family tradition of working on the water. These aquaculture operations each employ five to ten people and have a demonstrated beneficial impact on the local water quality.

As the number of farms increase, access to the water – places for the workers to get out to the farms, places to get supplies and equipment, places to unload the harvest - decreases. Fortunately, there is a public town landing nearby that many of the crews use. A few however, use a private pier that saves the crews almost an hour each day in transit time. This pier is on a prime piece of coastal real estate – the owner wants to continue to allow the lobstermen and aquaculturists who currently use the pier continued access. Local property values are rising, however, and the owner has already received inquiries about potentially selling the land.

Without this pier and access to the aquaculture beds, the local businesses will struggle and lose valuable time and money. It is feared that without some form of protection, these budding aquaculture businesses will go out of business – not for lack of a good product but for the inability to get to and from the water!

Working waterfronts also includes marinas and boat yards. By their very nature, marinas have to be located on the water. Marinas and boatyards provide good, solid, well paying jobs in skilled trades for their employees at the same time as providing access for fishing guides, charter boats and party boats. Without a place to dock their boat, meet their clients, get fuel, bait, and ice, these businesses would not be able to provide recreational

angling opportunities to locals and tourists. Marinas also provide access for many recreational boaters, allowing families to enjoy the great past time of boating.

Maine also has a strong tradition of boat building and numerous small boat yards can be found tucked away in coves and harbors along the coast. If you hit a log or piece of Maine granite and end up with a bent prop on your boat, it doesn't matter whether you are in a commercial lobster boat, a sport fishing charter boat or a cruising sailboat; the prop's still bent and somebody needs to fix it. Hopefully there is a boatyard nearby. This is one reason why keeping a working boatyard in business is important to all of us who use the water.

In Maine, many of coastal boatyards and marinas are struggling to make ends meet and rising property values threaten the viability of the business model.

One of the oldest and most historic shipyards in my state is for sale. Generations of boat builders turned out commercial fishing boats in a small, coastal town. The yard is still there—with deepwater frontage and commercial buildings—and I've heard that there are a number of businesspeople who would like to be able to buy the yard and start manufacturing high tech composite components for the marine industry. But developers are eyeing the property as well, and if they buy it, instead of creating new manufacturing jobs we will see vacation condos pop up. And we will lose yet more access to the water. We will also lose the jobs, good, high paying jobs. Some of the best jobs in coastal Maine are in the boat yards.

In Maine, as you will hear from Jen Litteral, the State has raised millions of dollars in bond issues to protect working waterfronts dedicated to commercial fishing. Maine has a rich waterfront tradition with strong economic, cultural, and historic ties to the commercial fishing industry. I come from a coastal community, an offshore island with a community that was built around commercial fishing. A community with a strong connection to its working waterfront.

When I was a teenager on the island of North Haven, there were a lot more fishermen and the island supported a diverse fishery. Throughout the history of the islands of Penobscot Bay, from the first natives fishing off the island in canoes to the herring seiners, gill netters, ground fisherman, and lobstermen, fishing has been an important part of the islands – providing jobs and a sense of place.

Locally owned and operated vessels seined for herring in the waters off the island and brought fish ashore for lobster bait. Now, most boats fish for lobster - my friends and neighbors on North Haven, like all fishermen up and down the coast, need a place to land their lobsters, store their bait, load and unload their lobster traps, buy diesel and repair their boats. Having a working waterfront is critical to their businesses and being able to feed their families and heat their homes.

This bill, H.R. 2548 builds on work done by this committee and my predecessor, former Congressman Tom Allen. My bill will help protect these and other working waterfronts

across the country by establishing a grants program within the Coastal Zone Management Act. The bill will help protect working waterfronts, the jobs they provide, and the ability for all of us to access the coast. The flexible definition of what a working waterfront is protects working waterfronts in all of the coastal states.

BoatUS, the National Marine Manufacturers Association and the Conservation Law Foundation have all written letters, expressing their support for working waterfronts and for the this bill. I ask that these letters of support be entered into the record.

Supporting working waterfronts is just a small piece of improving the management of our coasts. Developing a working waterfronts grant program is just part, but an important, part of ensuring our coastal economy remains strong. I am looking forward to working with you on this important issue.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing today.