

April 6, 2017

Good afternoon Senator Saviello, Representative Tucker, and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee: my name is Melissa Gates, and I am the Northeast Regional Manager and a lobbyist for the Surfrider Foundation, whose New England Regional office is located in my town of residence, Cushing.

The Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves and beaches through conservation, activism, research and education. Our Maine Chapter volunteers are beach goers, surfers, kayakers and the like who are active across several coastal issue areas, including protecting public beach access, mitigating plastic marine debris, advocating for improved water quality, and advancing smart coastal preservation and adaptation strategies.

Today I am representing the Surfrider Foundation Maine Chapter and our thousands of members and supporters across the state in offering strong support for LD1095, An Act To Establish the Maine Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission.

The formation of a coastal commission is a smart, forward-thinking approach to utilizing the best available science and a broad spectrum of affected stakeholders in tandem with legislators to advance understanding and prepare for coastal risks and hazards.

Indeed, we can learn from the mistakes of other states that have been struck by coastal disaster without being properly prepared, and we know that this is not merely a coastal issue: all taxpayers absorb the high cost of disaster relief. We know that we'd all save a lot of money and protect our coastal economy, resources and communities if we planned ahead, which is what LD1095 aims to do.

New Hampshire's state legislature formed a Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission in 2013 to help coastal communities and the state prepare for projected sea level rise and other coastal and coastal watershed hazards.

LD1095 has been crafted under the same successful vision that was executed in New Hampshire; a vision that manifested in an invaluable summary and recommendation product<sup>1</sup> released for public comment in March of 2016 that articulates issues, risks and

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<sup>1</sup> Download the full NH report: [j.mp/1ROeuuE](http://j.mp/1ROeuuE)



vulnerabilities, next steps and goals of the state as informed by 37 New Hampshire commissioners representing a wide swath of ocean and coastal interests. The final report and legislative recommendations have significantly increased the knowledge base of coastal risks and hazards in New Hampshire while concurrently generating buy-in on proposed recommendations across multiple sectors represented on the Commission, and outlining next steps and goals based upon the best available science in coordination with community and marine trade needs. Legislative recommendations have passed in NH while more are working their way through Assembly, and there are grant projects underway in New Hampshire focused on implementing the Commission's recommendations with municipalities. The fruits of the Commission's labor are paying off, and the State of New Hampshire is more resilient for it.

This working model from New Hampshire provided an excellent product that is now being used to help the State prepare for coastal hazards and risks. The Surfrider Foundation urges this Committee to recognize the immense value in replicating the New Hampshire effort here in Maine, and tailoring it to meet our State's specific needs.

In 2014, Maine's direct ocean economy:

- Generated \$2.3 billion (or 4.2%) of the state's GDP.
- Provided \$1.5 billion in wages and salaries.
- Provided 46,319 jobs.<sup>2</sup>

Over 65% of the State's ocean economy jobs were in coastal tourism & recreation, which is our State's single largest contributing sector at nearly 53% of our State's ocean GDP, and according to the World Travel and Tourism Council's latest report, travel and tourism is on the rise, with an expected 3.8% increase expected in 2017, alone.<sup>3</sup>

Because going to the beach, swimming, surfing, kayaking and other forms of ocean and coastal recreation are pivotal to Maine's ocean economy, are widely practiced, and are key elements of our State's socioeconomic fabric, as evidenced in a 2015 ocean and coastal marine recreation characterization study the Surfrider Foundation led in collaboration with the Northeast Regional Planning Body,<sup>4</sup> Surfrider urges an amendment to LD1095 to include a seat for a representative from a nonprofit organization that represents the interests of coastal and ocean recreation users. **It is**

<sup>2</sup> Available online at: National Ocean Economics Program, <http://www.oceaneconomics.org>

<sup>3</sup> Available online at: World Travel & Tourism Council, [goo.gl/gYbqKo](http://goo.gl/gYbqKo)

<sup>4</sup> Available online at: The Surfrider Foundation, [goo.gl/5xkdo3](http://goo.gl/5xkdo3)



**vitally important for the leading economic driver of Maine's ocean economy to have a seat at the table, if this commission is formed.**

Additionally, because the health of coastal and ocean ecosystems is paramount to properly assessing coastal risks and hazards, the Surfrider Foundation asks this Committee to also add one more seat to the Commission for a representative of a nonprofit organization that represents the interests of a healthy ocean and coastal ecosystem.

Finally, given the current state of our federal administration, whereby scientific data relevant to climate change is being intentionally removed from agency websites, the Surfrider Foundation also calls for an amendment to Section 8C, to remove the explicit recommendations for the Commission to reference data from federal agencies, and instead, replace the specific mention of agencies with the word, "reputable." In this way, the Commission would be mandated to review the best available science and projections, wherever those data are housed, and would not be relegated to reviewing data only from federal agencies. For your convenience, a copy of the bill as amended with the recommendations offered herein is attached to the handout provided to you today.

The Surfrider Foundation extends thanks to Representative Blume, and her multiple co-sponsors, for bringing forth this important bill in an effort to help Maine best prepare for changes involving our coast – a resource that impacts all Mainers, and not just coastal residents.

Thank you for your consideration of an Ought To Pass as amended vote.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gates  
Northeast Regional Manager  
Surfrider Foundation

