

Rep. Robert Alley, fisherman, from Beals Island:

Madame Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House,
I don't normally speak in here, but today we are taking up a bill which I am very worried about as a lifelong Washington County resident and commercial fisherman for over 50 years.

That bill, LD 1323, is bad for our area, the overall health of our fisheries, and for property rights. It is opposed by many different groups from the Maine Association of Realtors to the Rockweed Coalition, and ought to be voted down.

I have fished off Beals Island for fifty years. I have scalloped, dug clams, hauled traps, and spent a good part of my life on the water trying to help our fisheries stay strong for the next generation. The rockweed is vital habitat for all of these fisheries, and many landowners rightfully want to do their part to preserve it. Passing this bill would stop them from having that say, and put over 60 different marine species at risk – statewide.

I know this because I have been on boats where baby clams, lobsters, and other marine life we all depend upon for our livelihood, are accidentally swept up as bycatch in harvested rockweed. Dr. Brian Beal, of Down East Institute, and I have counted over 60 different species of marine life in one sample of rockweed, so you can't tell me rockweed harvesting doesn't have an impact on our coastal way of life.

I know some will say that this bill is good for fishermen, but I have heard from plenty in my area that would disagree. I know groups like the Cobscook Bay Fishermen's Association would also disagree, and I know many of the folks I represent would also disagree.

Madame Speaker, please join me in voting NO on the pending motion.

Thank you!