

# MAINE AQUACULTURE

## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR MAINES GROWING FUTURE

### FACTS OR FICTION?

Fact or Fiction? Maine aquaculture farms are “taking over” Maine’s marine public waters.

According to the Department of Marine Resources there are currently 125 leases occupying approximately 1200 acres of submerged state lands. This represents **less than .03% of the states coastal waters**. Few of these leases are exclusive use leases. Most of them have conditions specifically allowing multiple uses.

Although 1200 acres are leased the actual area occupied by the farmers equipment is less than 260 acres statewide. By comparison if you laid every legal lobster pot in the state side by side they would occupy roughly 28,000 acres (8% of coastal waters). The total acreage occupied by other uses such as private moorings, docks and marinas has never been added up statewide.

Fact or Fiction? Maine aquaculture farms are unregulated.

**Maine aquaculture farmers are currently regulated by 10 federal agencies, 6 state agencies and three regional fisheries management bodies.** In addition at least 4 international treaties directly impact how American aquatic farmers operate. Excluding normal business regulations such as tax, wage or worker safety laws, at least 16 federal legislative acts establish some form of regulatory authority over Maine’s marine aquaculture. Depending on the species farmed and type of production method used Maine’s aquatic farmers are required to seek at least 5 and up to 14 federal and state permits.

Fact or Fiction? Maine’s salmon farms operate without any environmental controls or monitoring.

**Maine salmon farming operations are routinely monitored through 8 state and 1 federal program.** These programs monitor the ecosystem under and around the cages, what is being fed to the salmon, how many fish are on a farm, The health of the fish, and whether farmers are using appropriate methods to reduce disease risks, In addition to these programs the 16 federal legislative acts that apply to marine aquaculture establish broad authority for federal agencies to inspect the farms at will.

Before any lease is granted the state conducts an environmental baseline study to characterize the ecosystem on the proposed lease site. If a lease is granted the DMR monitors the lease site at least once per year to determine if the farm is operating appropriately for the site. If the farm is found to be operating inappropriately the state can revoke the farms lease, or refuse to issue a smolt transfer permit and force the farm to cease operations.

Fact or Fiction? Maine aquaculture farms provide “low quality, poorly paid jobs”?

In a recent poll the Maine Aquaculture Association asked its members to summarize their wages and compensation packages. MAA found that, excluding management, average salaries in the finfish sector were \$29,500 and in the shellfish sector were \$24,500. Salaries in the shellfish sector were lower because a number of new farmers were taking lower salaries in order to reinvest capital to build their businesses. Benefit packages at member farms included, dental, health, life insurance, retirement funds, employee discounts and profit sharing. Benefit packages varied between 28% and 35% of salaries depending on the farm size and industry sector. Statewide, Maine aquaculture employs 834 full time farm workers, 603 in the finfish sector and 231 in the shellfish sector. These figures do not include any part time employees or workers involved in on processing or infrastructure companies.

Fact or Fiction? Maine’s aquatic farms are jeopardizing Maine's tourist industry.

Despite repeated allegations by a few privileged coastal landowners that farms will ruin the tourist industry there is no evidence to support the claim. Both Maine’s aquaculture and tourism sectors have grown steadily over the last 25 years.

Maine aquaculture and tourism can and do coexist. In fact in many instances aquaculture serves as an attraction and part of what makes the Maine coast unique. Maine is one of the last states in the nation to still have an active “working waterfront”. Sea kayaking and boat tour companies use Maine’s aquatic farms as a curiosity stop and talk about how humans are beginning to farm the oceans. Recreational fishing guides bring clients to fish around the farms because they act as artificial reefs attracting game fish to feed around the underwater structures the farms create. For similar reasons birdwatchers visit aquatic farms to view the many different birds attracted to the farms by the small invertebrates living around the farms. Tourists come to sample healthy Maine aquaculture products at the annual salmon and oyster festivals. Thousands of trout are raised yearly on our farms and released out into ponds to support recreational fishing.

Fact or Fiction? Aquaculture is bad for Maine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? We want to hear from you. Our members are committed to continually improving their operations. We value Maine; it’s communities and environment. WE HAVE TO WE DEPEND ON THEM. Please feel free to contact the Maine Aquaculture Association with any questions or suggestions you may have about what our farms do and how we can improve our operations.

## **MAINE AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION**

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