



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

April 10, 2015

The Honorable Jeb Bradley, Chair
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
State House, Room 100
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 354 *An act relative to the closing of clam, oyster, and other bivalve areas for restoration.*

Dear Chairman Bradley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 354. This bill amends RSA 211 to authorize the executive director of the N.H. Fish and Game Department, after a public hearing, to order the closing of clam, oyster, and other bivalve areas for restoration for a period of not more than 5 years. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) strongly supports this bill.

Scientists at UNH have estimated that coastal New Hampshire has lost about 98% of its historic shellfish population. Just between 1993 and 2000, the standing stock of oysters in the Great Bay Estuary declined from 25 million to 1.21 million. The causes of these declines includes disease, harvest and water pollution. This reduction is quite significant given oysters' natural ability to filter the estuary to improve water quality. Over the past 10 years, oyster stocks have started to recover, so attention to this issue is timely.

DES has awarded grants to support oyster restoration and believes that the specific authority to protect restoration efforts provides an important protection for the public funds which have been invested in this effort. Without this authority, restoration projects may be prematurely harvested, negating their ecological and water quality benefits. In addition, providing this authority will offer a level of comfort to future public and private funders as to the sustainability of the shellfish restoration projects they fund.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Steve Couture (steven.couture@des.nh.gov or 603-271-8801) or me (Thomas.burack@des.nh.gov or 603-271-3449).

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

CC: Rep. Schroadter, Rep. Spang, Rep. Tucker, Rep. Kaen, Sen. Prescott, Sen. Fuller Clark, Sen. Watters, Sen. Stiles
Glenn Normandeau, Executive Director, N.H. Fish and Game Department