

S.B. 803 – AN ACT CONCERNING AQUACULTURE JOB GROWTH

March 16th 2013

My son and I are long time western Long Island Sound shell fishermen. We fully support proposed bill #s 803, 805, & 6318. If passed these bills will promote much needed job growth, new product innovation, and the ability for existing smaller shell fish companies to expand with affordable state shellfish leases.

AFFORDABLE state aquaculture leases are essential for long term success!

The existing state shellfish lease system has stalled. Exorbitant prices are being paid to win state shellfish leases for questionable motives. The average small scale harvester hesitates to put up any new leases for fear of what he or she will have to pay to win the sealed bid. Winning bids of the last few years for productive state shellfish leases in western Long Island Sound are not sustainable for long term cultivation and harvest.

The pressure put on the harvest grounds, harvester, and shellfish product as a result of these high lease payments are not viable for new entrants or existing smaller companies looking to grow.

We cannot imagine any opposition to these proposed bills 803, 805, & 6318. If passed, would truly not affect any established larger companies in any way. Yet create new job opportunities, new CT grown seafood products, improve harvest consistency for smaller seafood harvesters to meet and secure market opportunities, and generate additional revenue for the state of Connecticut.

If there is any opposition to these proposed bills it will likely come from those representing the relatively few large shellfish companies that control the lion's share of productive CT shellfish leases at turn of the century prices. These large companies do not want change. Their security depends on the current broken lease system rather than modern efficient harvest techniques. The current lease system pits new and smaller companies against each other and one rouge CT bidder with seemingly unlimited financial resources not generated from within the industry. This affectively Drives lease prices so high that failure is almost guaranteed for any new or smaller company looking to grow.

We urge you to support and help turn bills 803,805 & 6318 into law for the benefit of many small scale family harvesters. Do not let the Connecticut aquaculture industry go the way of Federal Fisheries where a few large companies dictate policy concerning others livelihood.

Do not hesitate to contact us with any concerns or question.

Sincerely,

Brad Scher

Owner / Capt. Coastal Marine Fisheries

bradmscher@hotmail.com

203 544 9284 home

203 984 7802 boat