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Bureau of Land and Water Quality
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Ref: Project location 12 Water St., Rockland, ME.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 12 Water St, Rockland, ME marina expansion project.

I fully support plans to maximize Rockland's greatest natural resource: its large harbor that hosts commercial marine vessels and pleasure boats. Even the non-boaters in Rockland enjoy the harbor: visual access as they eat lunch in the Harbor Park overlooking the Public Landing; cooling off at the Public Beach on a hot summer day; or going for a walk along the boardwalk and expanding Rockland Harbor Trail.

I own two residential properties in Rockland's South End and have seen the improvements in the city over the past 15 years that attract businesses like Yachting Solutions to the harbor, and now Safe Harbor to expand on what Yachting Solutions built. At the 12 Water Street project location, ten years ago you could walk down Ocean Street, or take your children to the Ocean Street Playground, and watch the boats plying the harbor. Unfortunately, that visual access once available to the public has disappeared as pine trees and arborvitae have been let grow wild and large, creating a visual barrier to the harbor.

Rockland has come a long way from the days of limestone kilns and fish processing plants on the waterfront. While you can always say it is better than it was, there is still work to be done to maximize the greatest resource Rockland has – its connection to the ocean. Rockland city planners understood this and noted the need to preserve (or restore) visual access to the water in the City's Comprehensive Plan, specifically:

-- In the Land Use Patterns chapter, the Waterfront Zone section has the stated purpose to "Further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions; prevent and control water pollution; control building sites, placement of structures and land use; visual as well as actual points of access to coastal waters." (Chapter 6; Page 6-16).

-- In the Marine Resources chapter under Tourism, the "Goal: To make Rockland Harbor a major attraction for tourists," includes the "Policies: 1. Improve public facilities and access to the water, as well as harbor views from public roads. (Make the Harbor Trail a permanent feature)," and "2. Encourage private enterprise to attract people to, or near, the water. (Chapter 4; Page 4-18).

-- In the Future Growth and Development Chapter, the South End section emphasizes the need to preserve visual access to the water: "Commercial development pressures are anticipated along the highway corridors as well as along the waterfronts in both the Front Street and South End/Pleasant Street areas. Given that these neighborhoods provide a significant portion of the City's residential needs, it is important that these residential areas receive protection from encroaching commercial and industrial development. In order to preserve the residential quality of these areas, under no condition should commercial development be allowed inland of the waterfront streets. Any future development should be evaluated for the possible impact on the valuable waterfront views that exist in both the South End and in the Front Street areas." (Chapter 13; Page 13-4)

For the 12 Water Street project, preserving visual access to the water by not erecting large structures on land, and restoring lost visual access by trimming hedges and trees will make a marina development more attractive. An added benefit is that it will also increase security along the harbor trail.

Preserving or restoring visual access to the water creates benefits for the entire community, not just for those who live near the water's edge. And an internet search can produce many examples of coastal cities that have made a successful transition from an industrial waterfront to an attractive mixed-use waterfront. Zoning that protects visual and physical access to the water recognizes waterfronts as valuable assets for future community economic growth. Examples include keeping new development on the inland sides of coastal roads, not between the road and the water.

Development consistent with Rockland's Comprehensive Plan and best-practices for coastal development will bring more year-round residents, investment, and tax revenue. Protected visual and physical access to the waterfront will create the environment to attract an even greater number of tourists, investors, and jobs.

Sincerely,



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