

## **Ted O'Meara remarks on behalf of Frenchman Bay United at NRCM 2022 Conservation Leadership Awards, October 26, 2022, Hallowell, ME**

Thank you. Coming from the state's leading environmental organization, this award has special meaning for us, and I am pleased to accept it on behalf of our members and partners. I am joined here today by founding board members Kathleen Rybarz of Lamoine, president of Friends of Frenchman Bay, Jackie Weaver of Friends of Schoodic Peninsula, and Jamie Paterson of Hancock.

Unfortunately, our other founding board members were unable to join us today, but I want to acknowledge them: Jeri Bowers of Friends of Eastern Bay, Crystal Canney of Protect Maine's Fishing Heritage, and our board president Henry Sharpe of Sorrento

We all got involved in this fight because of our love for Frenchmen Bay and the communities surrounding it. From the time it was announced, we saw American Aquafarms as a threat to the environment, the local economy, Acadia National Park, and a way of life that has endured for generations.

Our coalition is broad and deep, including lobster men and women, small-scale aquaculture, year-round residents, seasonal residents, tourism and recreation businesses, land trusts, public officials, national park advocates and local, national, and international environment groups, including NRCM, for which we are very grateful.

We have grown into an organization with more than 400 members and we have raised more than half a million dollars, much of it spent on sophisticated modeling, data collection and the validation of environmental and economic impacts that have helped us make our case against this destructive project.

While the project is dead for now, its backers have promised to come back with new applications, so our work continues. We will be ready for them when they return, and we will continue to advocate for changes that will protect other coastal communities from having to fight project like this.

Our board president, Henry Sharpe, has worked tirelessly to analyze the American Aquafarms permit applications, to build the data that we have used to fight this project, and to grow our coalition. Yesterday, I reached to him to ask if there was anything he wanted me to say. This was his reply and I think it speaks to what all of us are trying to do:

"The thing I keep coming back to as we consider the public trust of our resources is the need to manage them in ways that insure their abundance, not their scarcity. Too often we take the continued sustainability of our natural resources for granted. In an effort to regulate their use, we offer permits that are -- despite best efforts -- nothing more than licenses to pollute and deplete until suddenly, those things we all hold dear are gone and extinct. Instead of granting permits to use smaller and smaller amounts of

increasingly scarce resources, we should stop to reconsider how to ensure the prolonged abundance of those things we all depend on.”

Thank you again for this award and for all that you do to protect and defend Maine’s natural resources.