

## MacNeil, Jami

---

**From:** MacNeil, Jami  
**Sent:** Monday, March 02, 2020 1:57 PM  
**To:** Davis Archer  
**Subject:** RE: Comment for Spinney Pier draft decision

Mr. Archer,

Thank you for your comments. These will be entered into the Department's record.

Best,

**-Jami MacNeil**

Environmental Specialist III  
Bureau of Land Resources  
Maine Department of Environmental Protection  
(207) 446-4894 | [jami.macneil@maine.gov](mailto:jami.macneil@maine.gov)

---

**From:** Davis Archer <davism.archer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 29, 2020 8:13 AM  
**To:** MacNeil, Jami <Jami.MacNeil@maine.gov>  
**Subject:** Comment for Spinney Pier draft decision

**EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.**

Jami MacNeil  
Bureau of Land Resources  
ME DEP

Dear Ms. MacNeil,

I am writing to oppose the Pier System and the Boat Ramp project L-28397-4E-A-N that is in the approval process for Jeff Spinney of Alna. I am not a part of any coalition or working group that you have heard from thus far, although I am glad to see that their efforts are organized and, that I can see, tactful. I recognize that my letter is arriving in your hands a day later than required by your memo, but I only received all of the information about this process late in the day yesterday. Prior to that, I had found it difficult to know how to become aware of and involved in the workings of this process. It is hard to stay abreast of proceedings like this when one is employed full-time, which is clearly and fortunately not a hindrance to many others in the opposition. I am likely one of the youngest respondents to your call for comments, and generally have not been involved in matters like this.

I will proceed fairly informally, knowing my letter is late, and because I have no particular credentials besides a science degree in natural resource management. I am thus familiar with some of the decision criteria - and respect the job you do - I am familiar with the ecological concepts involved, and quite frankly, am perturbed and rather alienated by the human dimension of the process as it unfolds in the neighborhood. This is a divisive issue.

I live in the Sheepscot River watershed, downstream of the project by about a mile. My property line is some 200 or 300 yards distant from the salt marsh that is continuous from there to the Spinney property, and beyond. Between the Sheepscot Rd bridge and the project location, there are indeed 2 small floats, with their respective piers poked into the

marsh, and presumably moorings, and presumably permits. These floats are not actually installed every year; some years they are, some not. I have never seen the currently permitted Spinney float in the water, indeed never seen a motorized boat go anywhere north (upriver) of the two floats that I have mentioned, and these are essentially in my backyard.

Unlike few others (that I ever notice), I spend my time on the bank of the river in this exact area, often walking north toward the woods and unbuilt landscape near the project area and beyond. My home is within earshot of the river and I can verify the rarity of motorized boat traffic. I think this shows that the current permit holders do not value this resource as a good option for motorized boating.

The obvious reason for its disuse is that this waterway, north of the reversing falls, is very shallow, with a lot of curvature, a vague navigational channel (to call it that), and sandbars and shifting patterns of marsh vegetation and mud. There are actually more hours of the day in which this part of the estuary is at a low tide - drained out and inconvenient to boat travel - than it is flooded and available. This is thanks to the impoundment caused by the ledge at the reversing falls. Sandbars notwithstanding, I know that paddlers cherish this part of the river because arriving by small boat is the only way that the public can reach it. In general, most of them prefer to paddle anywhere that motor boats are not allowed or cannot reach. To encourage motorized traffic on the river does infringe on the recreational opportunities of non-motorized boaters, especially where the waterway is limited in width. Additionally, if motorized traffic is encouraged by this pier installation, I foresee a common occurrence of these boaters fouling their hulls and propellers on the bottom of the river, which will cause really undue disruption of the benthic systems, physical and biological.

I am mistrustful of some of the specifications proposed by the applicant, beginning with the amount of dredging that will occur for a boat ramp. I am very surprised to hear that the Spinney property is ever yet used as a boat launch, being ill-suited for that purpose, and never having seen any boat apparently going or coming. I suspect this is a mostly false statement made for the purposes of the application. I doubt that the removal of 8 yards of material will be ultimately satisfactory, given the dimensions of the marsh there. To claim that only 370 square feet of that marsh will be indirectly affected is also ludicrous, given what we know about ecosystem dynamics, and the fact that it will go from being a continuous marsh ecosystem, to one cut into fragments. Flow hydrodynamics only account for one facet of the project's indirect impact. The biological system will feel this intrusion in all directions nearby. This project, of course, has literally twice the usual downstream effects because of incoming and outgoing directional flow. Beyond the initial dredging, the increased human use of this waterfront will undoubtedly destroy additional surrounding marsh, and these effects will compound themselves both onsite and nearby. We know that salt marshes are fragile, highly degradable by physical overuse, and a common good for all habitants of the watershed. We are not expecting these sportsmen to take good care of their salt marsh.

Based on a non-aggressive precautionary ecological approach, this project could be justifiably blocked. I believe that it is the DEP's role to assess the entirety of the known ecological effects of such a project, and also to take into account the unquantified, but undeniable, impacts on the surrounding environment. The DEP should also consider whether it is wise to treat this section of river upon the same use-value criteria as any other navigable waterway, when I have illustrated its distinction as an unsafe location for motorboating, and a foolish location for a pier. These are pragmatic perspectives that come from the repeated use of the resource. As I've said, it is clear that few people other than I, currently have this perspective in mind.

Thank you, and good luck,  
Davis Archer