

# FAQ: Maine's Wild Rockweed Industry

## Why is wild Maine rockweed targeted by industry?

Wild Maine rockweed is processed into fertilizers, farm animal supplements, pet food, and cosmetics.

## How is wild Maine rockweed cut and removed?

Most rockweed is cut from boats floating above the underwater rockweed forest.

Rockweed grows slowly yet **can be farmed (according to the Maine Seaweed Council<sup>1</sup>)**.

Edible farmed **kelp grows 2-3 inches a day<sup>2</sup>**.

Rockweed **grows back after cutting as little as 1-3 inches in a year<sup>3</sup>** .

*Machine rockweed cutter (Harpwell) Portland Press Herald /Getty Images*



*Raking boat full of Maine rockweed; Jim Kidd, Alamy Stock Photo*

*Loading one ton rockweed bags to ship to Canada from Cobscook Bay, ME*



## Cutting Methods



### Method: Raking cutting

- 20 foot boats, 1-2 persons in each boat, **max 6 tons/tide** (observed)
- Cutting: rake is dragged over floating rockweed. A cutter blade inside the rake slices the rockweed. Rockweed caught on the rake is flipped into the boat.

### Method: Machine cutting

- Cutting nozzle on the front of the boat, **max 17 tons/tide** (obs.)
- Cutting action: Large nozzle with **rotating blades chops the rockweed forest**. As bags fill with chopped rockweed (and snails), they are dropped off at a collection point.
- ~15-35 ton bags of rockweed are collected, then **loaded on a truck or boat and taken to the processing factory** (obs.).



*One ton rockweed bags stored for pickup; Waldoboro*

*Machine rockweed cutter -Harpwell; Portland Press Herald /Getty Images*



*One ton bags cut in Cobscook Bay on way to Canada*



## What are the laws and regulations for cutting wild Maine rockweed?

### Statewide rules:

- Must have a **license**, leave 16" of the rockweed plant (illegal to remove whole plants).<sup>4</sup>
- No limit to how much rockweed can be cut, when it can be cut, and where it can be cut.
- As of 2019: Rockweed can only be cut on intertidal lands where owner permission has been obtained.<sup>5</sup>

### State law for Cobscook Bay only:

- Assigned **sectors**, max. of **17%** rockweed biomass cut/ year / sector, **"no cut" conservation areas**<sup>6</sup>

## Who enforces the rockweed cutting laws/rules?

Maine Department of Marine Resources, **Marine Patrol enforces** these laws/rules.

The **requirement** for those cutting rockweed to get permission first from landowners is frequently violated (as reported by landowners).

The MRC website list steps if landowners believe their **rockweed has been stolen**.



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**Learn more and see references at [mainerockweedcoalition.org](http://mainerockweedcoalition.org)**

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