



Northwest Aquaculture Alliance

February 27, 2025

TO: Oregon House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
RE: HB 2965 “To establish certain requirements concerning aquaculture”

The Northwest Aquaculture Alliance (NAAA), whose mission is to champion responsible aquaculture in the Pacific Region, and whose members include leaders in the production of finfish and shellfish in freshwater and marine environments as well as support businesses in Hawaii, Oregon, Idaho, Washington, and Alaska, **STRONGLY OPPOSES HB 2965.**

As others have said in public testimony, this proposed legislation has no application to Oregon, whose geography is unlike Washington, Maine, British Columbia, and Alaska—places where it makes sense to site net pens in deep marine environments. Oregon’s shallow estuaries would never be appropriate places to site modern net pens. As to the potential of having net pens in the open ocean, whether in state or in federal waters, I believe most experts would agree that doing so would be a significant challenge because of the strong currents and wave action off the Oregon coast.

It is obvious that supporters of HB 2965 have not caught up with the latest advances in production methods, have cherry-picked the science to validate their false claims, and seem unaware of the rapid pace of innovation in all modes of aquaculture. Although some have claimed that by banning net pen aquaculture, Oregon would essentially be following the lead of Washington and California in enacting such bans. The fact is, “the entire West Coast” has not banned commercial net pens. No such ban in on net pens exists in California, whose coastal areas have been designated by NOAA as an “Aquaculture Opportunity Area.”

Furthermore, the Washington ban is not a “done deal.” Today, February 27, 2025, the Northwest Aquaculture Alliance filed a lawsuit in Thurston County Superior Court against the Washington Department of Natural Resources for its unlawful ban on commercial net pens.

While I had been “on deck” to testify remotely, there was not time for me to do so. Had I been able to testify in person or remotely, I would have:

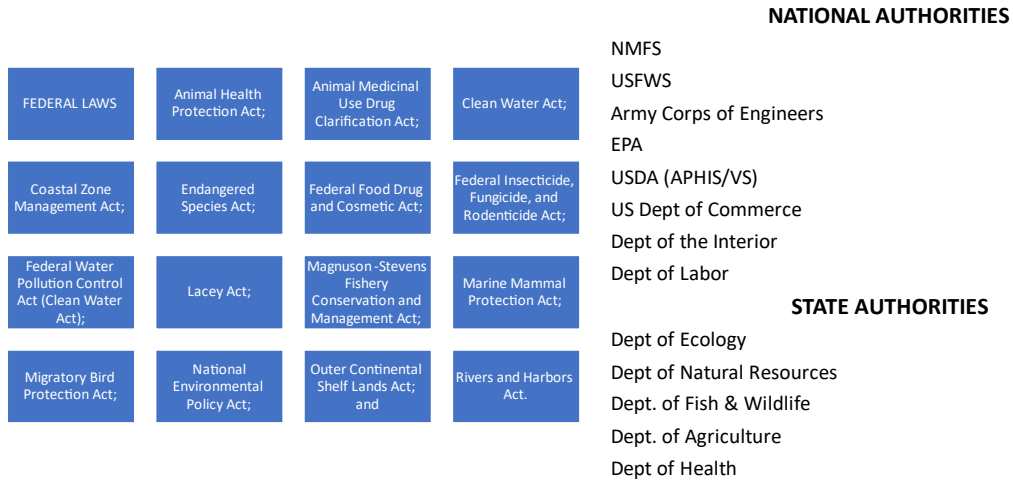
- Challenged the assertion that the new version of this bill was crafted after “extensive consultation” when several groups, including ours, were never consulted; and,
- Challenged the bill sponsor’s statement that aquaculture is an “industry that is not known for being particularly careful.”



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The following graphic, which was part of a presentation I made in 2022 to an agriculture leadership organization, shows a typical regulatory scenario in Washington state.

# “We Have a Rule for That”



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Clearly, aquaculture as an enterprise is highly regulated, and operators need to comply with federal, state, and local regulations. It is also now the beneficiary of rapidly evolving technology such as digitalization; AI; clean energy; developments in “green” feeds; improvements in genetics; advances in genomics; breakthroughs in animal health and welfare; developments in robotics, new materials; water purification, and nanotechnology. The list goes on.

In fact, innovation in this sector is outpacing other food production sectors. As the newly elected president of the international Aquaculture Innovation Alliance—representing research institutions, trade organizations, and academia in Norway, Chile, Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, and the USA—I am excited about all the innovations taking place globally to the benefit of developing countries as well as the people working in this field.

As a former Oregonian who left teaching English and American Literature at Lewis & Clark College to work for the Portland-based West Coast Fisheries Development Foundation, I discovered how much I came to care deeply about the fishing and seafood industry in California, Oregon, and Washington—our Foundation’s “territory.” After leaving the Foundation, I have been fortunate to serve in various roles for leading seafood companies and trade groups. I was the first Communications Director for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute—exactly at the time US retailers and restaurants were embracing farmed Atlantic salmon from Norway as being higher in quality, as well as fresh year-round.



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After leaving Alaska, I worked in a consulting role for the Association of Chilean Salmon and Trout Farmers (now SalmonChile), helping launch Chilean salmon into the US market. Over the next 18 years that I worked for SalmonChile, I watched as the Chilean salmon farming companies created thousands of jobs (now totaling 80,000 direct and indirect jobs), built hospitals, roads, schools, and worker housing—and in the process gave the market a product it wanted: Nutritious, high-quality salmon, available fresh year 'round. Over the course of my decades-long career, I have had the good fortune to work in a consulting capacity for many leading US seafood companies such as UniSea, Trident Seafoods, and Ocean Beauty; and I have had the privilege of working for trade associations such as the Pacific Seafood Processors Association and the Global Aquaculture Alliance (now the Global Seafood Alliance)—to name just a few. And in this work, I have come to believe that the days of “farmed versus wild” are over. Everywhere in the global seafood community, aquaculture is accepted as the food for the future—to be embraced rather than banned.

Aquaculture is the future. Legislation such as HB 2965—which bans an activity outright that might never be cited in Oregon for other, more practical reasons, is misguided, and is certainly bad public policy.

Sincerely,

Jeanne McKnight, Ph.D.

Executive Director

**Northwest Aquaculture Alliance (NWAA)**

President

**Aquaculture Innovation Alliance (AIA)**