



HB 2956 – Regulating Aquaculture in Oregon - SUPPORT

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, Members of the Committee,

The Conservation Angler is a nonprofit wild fish and wild river advocacy organization working to protect and restore wild fish in the home rivers for the benefit of present and future generations. To that end, The Conservation Angler supports HB 2956 as amended.

HB 2956 is a proactive approach to establish sideboards and guidelines for an industry sector that frequently is challenged to comply with the most basic rules protecting state waterways from pollution and ecological harm.

Like its counterpart land-based agricultural sector, there exists no comprehensive regulatory structure at the state level. Creating a regulatory framework will provide clear expectations for stewardship by this industry which – while clearly producing food – does so in a way that most often externalize the cost of doing business and protecting the public trust resources such as clean water (whether salt or fresh).

The use of marine or freshwater to produce food fish may work well for certain fish species, but it is a disaster for the anadromous salmonids of the Pacific Northwest. Prior testimony from the aquaculture and fish processing industry referenced how open water aquaculture co-exists well with wild salmon around the world – however the current status of wild Atlantic salmon from Norway, Scotland, Iceland, Eastern Canada is poor – largely due to the extensive and adverse net pen culturing of Atlantic salmon. Net pen aquaculture does nothing to relieve harvest pressure on wild salmon - that is a myth. Aquaculture, not unlike agriculture, has far to go to reduce its carbon footprint as well – it is no panacea to fighting the climate impact effects of large-scale food production in addition to the ecological impacts to near shore areas created by aquaculture.

Purportedly safe farmed salmon operations in New Zealand and South America were also touted as benign to their host ecosystems – and while that may be true, those operations are well outside of the historic range of wild Atlantic and Pacific salmonids – so there are fewer direct conflicts between those fish farms and wild salmonids (though there are very likely adverse interactions with those farming operations and indigenous fish and marine life species in those ecosystems below the equator.

Opponents of this legislative framework point towards conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund which purportedly support the adoption of widespread aquaculture expansion. In reviewing the organizational position for these multi-national nonprofits, it is clear that their positions are quite nuanced and focused on sustainability and carefully scaled to the specific ecosystems of various regions across the globe – hardly a broad ringing endorsement of aquacultural expansion in the Pacific Northwest.

The time is now for HB 2956-5 to protect Oregon’s bounty of wild fish that call Oregon their home waters.