

Dick Sheldon: My name is Dick Sheldon. I met my first ghost shrimp in 1940 at the age of 5 at Stackpole Harbor [unintelligible]. There weren't many around then. Puget Sound and Willapa Bay, both estuaries, are far apart in their function and impact. It takes 14 years for a complete saltwater change in Olympia. Willapa Bay takes 3 days. The clarity of Puget Sound water is beautiful to see. The murkiness of Willapa is food. The Sound's bottom is firm with glacier gravels. Willapa solely flanks Columbia River's sand. Puget Sound is primarily a captive ecosystem. Willapa's ecosystem extends into and supports the entire marine system of southwest Washington's marine community and economic base. Ground raised oyster beds are the highest rated habitat for the majority of marine critters in Willapa Bay. The quicksand caused by burrowing shrimp grounds contribute nothing. In fact, they subtract wholesale from the processes needed to maintain the historic balance in Willapa's now threatened ecosystem.

Untended state agency-owned bed lands have become the prevalent title lands in this negative category. Willfully given over to both shrimp and invasive japonica. They contribute little value or nothing to our system. Oystermen have had title to the lands we share with the rest of the bay's [unintelligible] communities but do not own the ecosystem that every current creature uses in common. This is what we are fighting to save. DOA insists this is a shrimp versus oyster issue. It never has been. Oysters, a proven environmental plus on their own, are a small part of the [unintelligible] community being destroyed by the shrimp imbalance in Willapa. This condition was created and fed by actions of man in taming the Columbia River. Chemical control has by far shown to have the least impact after decades of oystermen's failed experiments on non-chemical control.

We are here tonight speaking not only for our interest but for our ecosystem and its billions that inhabit it. After 150 years of oystering, Willapa Bay remains the cleanest, most pristine estuary in the continental United States. Willapa's small grower families have spent millions in defending this ecosystem. We funded a 1200-acre wetland restoration project with Washington trumpeter swans that say "stop the pulp mill." Two 1,000-lot developments to be built on filled wakes, swamps, and salt marshes were fought, stopped, and now protected forever. Every failed low-income septic system threatening Willapa waters has been fixed free of charge. Because of our growers' relentless pressure Spartina is gone from Willapa Bay. And the Pacific flyaway preserves. All this and much more -- because of these small growers' financing and dedication over the years. Now paying for the ever-changing DOE demands of this permit process has taken every cent from our 40-year old environmental fund. I ask now who will fight for Willapa's health. With the DOE support of option 1, doing nothing, it certainly won't be the Washington Department of Ecology. Thank you.