

Dick Sheldon: My name is Dick Sheldon. I have Willapa Resources and I live in Pacific County. I met my first ghost shrimp at Stackpole Harbor in 1940. I was 5 years old. The natural [unintelligible] bottom shellfish of Willapa Bay are the highest rated habitat over all for marine species using Willapa Bay for their varying needs. Shrimp beds are the lowest value and are monocultures with only shrimp. The explosion of shrimp in Willapa is a recent phenomena – not a natural cycle as some claim. Both pre-history and recent history proves this. The recent shrimp explosions are a direct attack on the balance of the bay's ecosystem, from food production, protective habitat, and its ability to support the huge populations of marine species that use Willapa as a nursery – then move on into the southwest Washington marine economy. This is not an oyster vs. shrimp issue. This is a shrimp vs. Willapa ecosystem issue and it always have been.

Bottom oyster growers have always shared these beds with uncontrolled, uncountable marine creatures that utilize the same beds – unlike terrestrial farms that target the creatures or infections to their product directly, the growers are targeting shrimp that physically destroy the beds needed to support both the oysters and the invaluable habitat provided. It must be emphasized that Washington agencies own the majority of Willapa badlands -- which will go untreated for both shrimp and invasive grasses, which will be permanently lost to the Willapa imbalanced ecosystem. The economic impact to Southwest Washington marine economy will be felt and is being felt as we sit here today quibbling over the allowance of shrimp control, even only on private beds. Until recently, Willapa oyster operations were near completely owned by local families who realized that first and foremost the badlands themselves must be protected. It was self-interest, but isn't that also society's and the state's interests?

It seems the state has chosen to go political rather than environmental in their review of this issue in a lot of cases. The growers have been, for decades, Willapa Bay's primary and constant protector of its shorelines, of its water quality, against improper development, and every phase of protection affecting the bay. They've spent millions in legal defenses for the bay -- holding developers and potential polluters to high environmental standards. When the county authority weakened and DOE went silent, pulp mills never followed Willapa Bay. Spartina did not take the bay. The pacific flyway was saved because of this. 2 huge subdivisions planned on filled lakes and swamps on septic systems on the bay shore were not built – only because of the growers' opposition.

Again, the growers have paid for and created methods of control against the two top immediate threats to Willapa's ecosystem: shrimp and japonica. The science has been done and overdone. Still, the DOE demands more and more – not because it's necessary but more because of the politics. DOE must recognize the growers as allies. We always have been. Not to force the bottom growers out of the bay – losing the only natural systems that may be left in Willapa. Thank you.