

Draft 5/14/18

**Resolution in support of Willapa Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association permit request**

WHEREAS for generations the oyster and shellfish industry have been good stewards of the precious Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor estuaries; and

WHEREAS Willapa Bay has long been recognized as the cleanest estuary in the continental United States, due to the diligence of the local shellfish industry, their vehement protection of water quality, habitat and the ecological function of the bay; and

WHEREAS the Spartina program, championed by the local shellfish farmers, is recognized as the most successful invasive weed eradication effort in the nation if not the world, a designation held by Willapa Bay because of the shellfish farmers, not in spite of them; and

WHEREAS Willapa Bay is the largest producer of farmed oysters in the United States such that, when combined with Grays Harbor, this area along the southwest Washington coast produces approximately 25 percent of all oysters in the United States; and

WHEREAS Willapa Bay is also a crucial component of the shellfish economy in Washington State, producing approximately 65 percent of the oysters and 13 percent of the clams harvested in Washington State; and

WHEREAS shellfish aquaculture is the largest private employer in Pacific County, a significant private employer in Grays Harbor County, and one of the major industries in southwest Washington, with an increased importance following declines in the timber and fishing industries; and

WHEREAS burrowing shrimp are not only negatively affecting the economy of these communities, they are effectively disrupting the entire ecology of Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor because the shrimp destroy the benthos, including eelgrass habitat, that support the base of the food web; and

WHEREAS over \$8 million has been invested in research in the quest to replace carbaryl, a chemical pest-control method used in the estuary for decades, and

WHEREAS this process has found imidacloprid to be 90 percent less toxic than carbaryl – and is not even lethal to the shrimp themselves – while still providing an effective alternative to controlling the shrimp population; and

WHEREAS in 2015 the Department of Ecology issued a permit based on findings documented in an Environmental Impact Statement and again documented in a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement issued in September 2017, where Ecology had concluded that the same use of the same pesticide would meet its requirements under the Sediment Management Standards; and

WHEREAS in 2018 Ecology has tentatively denied a much more modest permit than the permit issued in 2015, and published a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement that reversed previous findings and repeatedly claimed more data are needed; and

WHEREAS Ecology's denial of the permit precludes that data from ever being collected; and

WHEREAS Ecology refuses to acknowledge a proposal to limit all treatments in 2018 to only those areas specifically being used for scientific study, to limit the acres treated to levels below those in the proposed permit, and to have those results reviewed by a panel of scientific experts to answer the questions that Ecology has raised; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative District Democratic Committee urge the Governor and the Department of Ecology to find a path forward to immediately issue an NPDES permit to control burrowing shrimp in Willapa Bay at a minimum to conduct the research required to answer the questions they have proposed using the money that has been appropriated by the Legislature to the Department of Agriculture for this specific purpose at a level which will at least allow small farmers to remain viable until the research is completed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all parties are urged to begin an open, constructive, collaborative relationship with Agriculture in order to get these questions answered and the data analyzed and reviewed by a panel of scientific experts.