

## Jeanne McKnight

On behalf of the Northwest Aquaculture Alliance (NWAA), an organization of aquaculture producers and support businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, British Columbia, and Hawaii, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the State of Washington's Guidance Document for marine net pens.

As this Guidance Document makes clear, Washington State now has in place an extremely rigorous and well-thought-out framework that is designed to reduce potential risks and establish robust safeguards for this very necessary aspect of the aquaculture industry. Without a doubt, the aquaculture industry that exists in 2021 has evolved significantly from what it was in the past, with continuous improvements in underwater monitoring, reporting, and in the production of more sustainable, environmentally friendly feeds.

We believe the key agencies involved in developing this Guidance Document, Ecology, Agriculture, Fish & Wildlife, and Natural Resources, have set the stage for the responsible development of marine aquaculture in Washington, resulting in high value, locally produced, nutritious food that the world needs and that consumers demand. In fact, a recent consumer survey conducted by Bellevue, Washington-based GMA Research Corporation (attached), makes it clear that in 2021, consumers want their seafood--whether wild or farmed--to be local, and they are willing to pay more for that "locally sourced" product.

We believe that all necessary safeguards are in place to reassure the public that there is very low risk in farming what our state law has mandated: Sterile native fish, produced with minimal impact on the marine environment.

Thank you.



## Aquaculture and Aquatic Foods Public Opinion Survey - 2021

In March 2021, the Northwest Aquaculture Alliance commissioned GMA Research Corporation, a Bellevue, Washington-based market research and strategic insights firm, to gauge consumer attitudes toward aquatic foods (the product) and aquaculture in general (the process).

GMA conducted a statewide online survey among 900 randomly chosen adults. This survey carries a +/- 3% maximum error margin, with a 95% confidence level. Following are highlights from this survey.

- The top 3 factors which most influence adults making seafood purchases are affordability, locally produced/farmed, and certified sustainable. These are followed—in order—by such factors as nutritional information, cooking instructions, and the presence of a recognizable brand. While all factors play an important role in influencing purchasing decisions, the strongest influencer is *affordability*—how much does it cost compared to other protein choices or other seafood?
- A majority of those surveyed say that “Washington Grown” is important to them, noting that they would prefer to purchase “Washington Grown” seafood over fish harvested from foreign sources.
- A key finding of the survey is that shoppers say they would also *pay more for seafood locally produced/harvested in Washington State*.
- Most agree that the *farming of fish such as salmon and trout is an activity that can be done sustainably*. They also consider locally produced/farmed fish to be an important source of healthy seafood.
- The survey also found that, increasingly, people believe that that ocean harvesting of wild-caught species cannot continue to meet the future demand for seafood.
- Regarding aquaculture, most consumers surveyed agree that aquaculture and the production of aquatic foods provides consumers with a good source Omega-3 fatty acids, proven to improve human health.
- Aquaculture produces seafood that consumers can afford, and supplies the market with fresh, available protein year-round.
- Consumers ranked commercial fishing and aquaculture in the top 10 Washington industries, along with well-known and popular products such as apples, other tree fruit such as cherries, wine, wheat, potatoes, and beef.