

# Jeanne McKnight

Alright, thank you. Yes, I'm Jeannie McKnight, and I'm the executive director of the Northwest Aquaculture Alliance, formerly the Washington Fish and Shellfish Association. We changed our name to reflect the fact that our members represent growers such as Cooke and a number of other growers, as well as support industries that by the way also represent and work with the wild fish sector.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk tonight. We are absolutely convinced as an alliance, and we are one of many such organizations throughout the world that aquaculture, whether it's marine, freshwater or closed containment has a role to play as others have mentioned in food security and the creation of robust blue economy here in Washington.

Others have talked about the fact that we import 90% of the seafood or 80 to 90%, so I don't need to go into that too much, but one thing I must say is that one of the lessons that we've learned from the pandemic is that we need to grow our own and we need to become better at growing our own seafood, because we are just one pandemic away from borders being closed and food not being able to come our way.

I want to also say that prior to becoming the agriculture alliance, the fish growers association conducted some consumer research, and one of the things that came up in that research of 700 Washington households, western Washington households was that overwhelmingly, and I can provide backup for this - this was done by GMA research - overwhelmingly people felt that aquaculture done sustainably, fish farming done sustainably was something that they could accept, and part of that came from people feeling that they wanted - this pre-pandemic - that they wanted to have locally grown food.

Tonight we're here to support our member Cooke Aquaculture Pacific and its request to grow sterile rainbow trout in the four net-pen sites that were previously permitted for Atlantic salmon. We're here not just for Cooke, though. We're here I'm here, to talk about the fact that it is whole idea of opening up our economy to aquaculture as the rest of the country, the rest of the world has done is something that is so important right now.

As an aside we now know that there was a growing body of evidences in the record, in the public record, about steelhead being nearly identical to that in the use of in feed conversion to Atlantic salmon. In fact, after Ron Hardy, a leading researcher on this topic, believes that steelhead made metabolize commercial fish feeds more efficiently than Atlantic salmon do and meaning that the

proposed switch maybe in fact more beneficial to water quality.

I want to also say that I've worked aquaculture business for the past 25 years. I started out my career working for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute at an organization called the West Coast Fisheries Development Foundation. Absolutely loved working for the wild fish sector, but as luck would have it, salmon runs were depleting, commercial, let's say whether you were trolling or trying to get bottom fish, you know, things have changed in the environment and even though the US has a very well managed fishery, climate is changing and fish are going elsewhere, so we can't we can't catch enough fish to feed our people, so we've got to do something about this.

Not only does marine aquaculture, however, have the lowest environmental footprint of any animal protein farming production system on the planet, but it has lower feed requirements, lowest water usage, low energy requirements, resulting in low greenhouse gas emissions, and everybody's in love with these days. They think that and some previous speakers have alluded to this about closed containment land-based systems. We, the alliance believe that we need all forms of aquaculture, and we are here to support because we believe that this will become the basis of a very robust economy here.

On a final note, I often get messages from colleagues and friends that I've met through my work in aquaculture all around the world saying what is going on in Washington state. What they mean is, why all the hurdles? Why the opposition? And why can't Washington get with the program? And believe me what happens in Washington does not stay here when it comes to aquaculture. People are watching all over. The eyes of the world are upon us, but with these permit modifications, and the requirements that, go with it, we think we have the chance to do things, right. To lead the nation and becoming a sustainable producer of nutritious seafood. The production of which will create much needed employment opportunities here in Washington.

I personally and we trust that the Department of Ecology will make the right final decision in the right way to permit modification based on science and not politics. Thank you.