

Dear Alaska House Fisheries Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to HB 111/ SB 108: Finfish Farms and Products. Alaska's wild fisheries are significant in supporting Alaska Native communities, filling our freezers, and driving our economy. Allowing non-native fish species to be farmed here poses a grave risk to our wild stocks, even in "contained" environments.

One of the greatest concerns with farmed salmon operations is their propensity to contribute to harmful algae blooms. These blooms can deplete oxygen levels in the water and kill large numbers of fish in a short period. In addition to harming farmed fish themselves, these blooms can have cascading effects on entire lake ecosystems, jeopardizing other species that inhabit or rely on these waters. Even so-called "contained" systems may not always remain secure, as floods, mechanical failures, or negligence can allow contaminated water or fish to escape. This increases the risk of spreading diseases and negatively impacting neighboring habitats.

Alaska's wild fisheries—particularly wild salmon—are treasured resources that support Alaska Native communities, fill residents' freezers, and contribute substantially to the state's economy and cultural identity. Introducing or expanding finfish farming here undermines our ability to market the unique quality and taste of Alaska's wild catch. Small boat harvesters who rely on these fisheries for their livelihoods will face direct marketplace competition from cheaper, farm-raised alternatives. Moreover, if the state legislature permits finfish farming at one level—whether it involves salmon or other non-native species—it opens the door to further expansions of fish farming practices in the future, thus compounding the risk.

Instead of turning to fish farming to bolster food production, I urge you to focus on the proven management and protection of spawning and rearing habitats of salmon and other species. Alaska's historical success in managing wild fisheries stems from prudent, science-based policies designed to keep fish stocks healthy and sustainable. Those same principles should continue guiding our approach to food security. Protecting water quality and preventing environmental damage from harmful algae blooms is a more effective—and more responsible—method of ensuring a thriving and robust fish population for current and future generations.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to reject HB 111/SB 108 and prioritize the sustainable management of Alaska's wild fisheries. Our waters, wildlife, local economies, and cultural traditions all depend on safeguarding these invaluable natural resources.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ms. Abigail Dodd

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