



TO: Senate Committee on Natural Resources

FROM: Quinn Read, Center for Biological Diversity

DATE: January 25, 2023

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 89 – Relating to aquaculture

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, we respectfully submit the following comments in support of SB 89, which would help address some of the worst ecological impacts associated with industrial aquaculture. The Center is a nonprofit, public interest environmental organization dedicated to the protection of imperiled species and the habitat and climate they need to survive. The Center is supported by more than 1.7 million members and online activists throughout the country. We strongly support SB 89 because it proposes common sense reforms to aquaculture practices to mitigate harms to the environment and to wildlife.

Industrial aquaculture is a threat to Oregon’s aquatic environment and the wildlife that depend on it. High stocking densities make fish farms a dangerous source of disease and parasites that can spread to wild fish populations. Industrial aquaculture produces a great deal of waste, including food and feces, that can contaminate nearby waters. Excess nutrients in the ecosystem can lead to an overgrowth of algae and a decline in oxygen, harming other aquatic species. Fish farms likewise result in the spread of antibiotics and other chemicals into the nearby aquatic environment.

The risk of farmed aquatic animals escaping into Oregon waters is also of great concern to the Center. Indeed, the Washington legislature banned all net-pen farming of non-native fish in the state in 2018 in response to the catastrophic collapse of Cooke Aquaculture’s Cypress Island facility, which released more than 260,000 non-native Atlantic salmon into Puget Sound, threatening native salmonids with disease, competition for food and the risk of inbreeding.

The aquaculture industry is expanding rapidly in Oregon. Given the known risks, the legislature should take action now to ensure the protection of Oregon’s fish, wildlife, and its fragile aquatic ecosystems. Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. You can reach me at qread@biologicaldiversity.org.