

Statement by Congressman Les AuCoin  
Field Hearings on Aquaculture  
Oceanography and Fisheries Subcommittees,  
House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee  
April 29, 1977  
Newport, Oregon

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome you and my colleagues to the City of Newport and to Oregon's First Congressional District.

Let me begin by complimenting you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Breaux, the Chairman of the other subcommittee, for holding these hearings in the field.

For reasons that you'll soon discover, you could hardly come to a better place to see the potential of aquaculture as part of a balanced program of developing the food-producing capacity of the sea.

Here in Oregon, we not only have an extremely important commercial fishing industry, but also -- through the leadership of the State Legislature, private enterprise, and the outstanding work of Oregon State University's Sea Grant Program and its School of Oceanography -- we are doing pioneer work in the field of aquaculture.

Mr. Chairman, for the record, and for the benefit of those who have come to attend this hearing today, I think it's important to talk about the significance of what our two subcommittees are attempting to do as we work on this aquaculture bill.

We are trying to prepare this Nation for the immense food production needs we'll face in the decades ahead.

We are trying to enable this country to turn to the sea as a major source of food in the future -- a source we must tap for our own use, as well as for export, to meet the needs of a protein-starved world.

What we do now, Mr. Chairman, will determine how well prepared our country will be in the years to come. The sea holds the answer.

And it's not simply a question of "tomorrow." The average American's diet has been shown to be nutritionally disastrous today. The Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs issued a report earlier this year which set specific national goals for improved nutrition and health. One of the

major national goals was a substantial increase in the amount of fish served on American dinner tables.

This is an immediate need and, once again, the sea holds the answer.

In longer terms, the time has come, Mr. Chairman, to recognize that agriculture alone will not meet our own country's food needs indefinitely and that it cannot alone solve the problem of world hunger.

The time has come to begin serious national efforts to "farm the sea." The aquaculture bill under study by our Committees is an important step in that direction. The new 200-mile limit, coupled with increased fisheries development within the 200-mile zone, and coupled with assistance to the traditional commercial fisherman, I am confident that this bill can help the U.S. prepare for the food demands of the future.

With this bill, we have the opportunity to take another step toward the creation of a national ocean resources policy that will -- for the first time -- give the country a strategy to protect and fully develop the potential of the sea.

Not only will this meet consumer needs, but it can mean a whole new era of economic growth for the fishing industry, for coastal states, and for coastal communities such as Newport.

Mr. Chairman, I want to now give the Committee an Oregon perspective about aquaculture.

Aquaculture is not new to Oregon. Elementary salmon hatcheries were established by the state at the end of the 19th century and oysters have been farmed since around 1930.

Today in Oregon there are 10 permits to operate chum salmon hatcheries, three to operate coho hatcheries, and three to operate chinook hatcheries. Thirty-two trout permits are privately held and 22 different areas of the coast are leased by the state for the growing of oysters.

The largest of these is farmed by Sam Hayes of Tillamook who we will visit this afternoon.

Good luck and hard work have combined to make Oregon a national leader in aquaculture. A mild climate, good water quality and temperature, and a general absence of pollution have made Oregon a "natural" for its development. Still,

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the infant industry would not have survived had it not been for the determination of the men and women who actually farm the fish and the support of those who understand the potential of aquaculture in a hungry world.

I would like to talk briefly of the roles played by two institutions in the development of Oregon aquaculture: The Sea Grant College located at Oregon State University and the Oregon State Legislature.

Sea Grant has been instrumental in the development of commercial aquaculture in this state. For example, the chum salmon fishery in Oregon was nearly crippled by spoiled spawning grounds. Then Sea Grant installed an experimental gravel incubator at Netarts Bay, which helped revitalize the fishery. The facility is located about 20 miles north of here and we will see it this afternoon. This incubator consists of nylon mesh to hold the eggs and a gravel bed where new fry develop. When ready, the chum fingerlings swim from the incubator into Whiskey Creek and out to sea.

More than three million chum salmon have been hatched at Netarts Bay since the 1969-1970 season. By 1974, 3,000 adult fish were returning there to spawn. The project has done so well that surplus eggs are now being distributed by the state to private hatcheries. If these hatcheries experience the same success as the pilot program at Netarts Bay, it's estimated they will bring home two to three million pounds of fish annually by 1980.

These statistics have tremendous implications for the economics of small coastal communities like Newport. Assuming that a chum farmer can sell his product for somewhere between 25 cents and \$1 per pound and assuming a returning chum salmon weighs around 12 pounds -- this could mean a multi-million dollar industry. As these benefits filter down from supplier to processor, to packager it's clear that aquaculture could breathe new life into communities up and down the coast.

Sea Grant's involvement is not limited to the Netarts Bay facility. Just as a large percentage of the national program's research money is devoted to aquaculture, so it is at the local level as well. In 1976-1977, seven aquaculture-related projects were underway, ranging from the breeding of oysters to a feasibility study of the marketing of aquaculture seafood.

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In the long term, perhaps the most important contribution of Sea Grant has been its success in acquainting local and state officials to the potential of aquaculture. Sea Grant projects are credited with moving the Oregon State Legislature to establish in 1971 a comprehensive program to farm chum salmon. Two years later this authority was expanded with my strong support as House Majority leader to include the farming of coho and chinook salmon.

And so, Mr. Chairman, in summary let me say that Oregon is proud to show this committee what it has done in the field of aquaculture. We are flattered that you have come to visit us and see the work we have done.

Aquaculture is an important tool and Congress has a much larger role to play in the development of sea farming.

I speak for the people of the First Congressional District when I say I hope each and every member of the Committee will enjoy his stay here and will find it informative.

I want to thank Mr. Clyde Hamstreet and Dick Miller of Embarcadero, Mrs. Mo Neimi of Mo's Restaurant, the Weyerhaeuser Company, Oregon Aqua-Foods, the staff of the Oregon State University Marine Science Center, including in particular, Mr. Bill Wick, the Director of the OSU Sea Grant Program, as well as dozens of other local citizens for helping my staff handle all the arrangements for the Committees' stay.

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