

Delta County Economic  
Development  
Alliance



February 1, 2016

Representative Dan Lauwers, Agriculture Committee Chair  
Representative Triston Cole, Majority Vice-Chair  
Representative Ray Franz  
Representative Ben Glardon  
Representative Joel Johnson  
Representative Rick Outman  
Representative Bruce Rendon  
Representative Holly Hughes  
Representative Brett Roberts  
Representative Jason Sheppard  
Representative Henry Vaupel  
Representative Charles Brunner  
Representative George Darany  
Representative Alberta Talabi  
Representative Gretchen Driskell  
Representative Bill LaVoy  
Representative LaTanya Garrett  
House of Representatives Agriculture Committee  
124 North Capitol Avenue  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

RE: Support for House Bill No. 5166

Dear Agriculture Committee Members,

The Delta County Economic Development Alliance is a private, not for profit 501(c)(3) located in Escanaba, Michigan. Our function is to lead the promotion of economic development of Delta County through the retention, expansion, and attraction of business and industry. We enthusiastically support HB5166 to enable net pen Aquaculture in Michigan. With ever increasing demand for locally sourced protein, this important legislation provides an opportunity to expand and grow agriculture in Michigan, encourage responsible and sustainable economic development of our natural resources, and most importantly grow healthy, delicious Michigan fish to feed Michigan people.

In the U.P. we understand the dynamics of balancing economic development with protection of our natural resources. In 2012 we started our efforts to develop Aquaculture as a new industry in our community. Our core values are Environmental Responsibility and

Accountability, Product Quality and Safety, Respect for others, Integrity, Research, Objectivity, and Economic Development. Our vision is to develop a community-supported fishery that enhances our wild commercial industry with healthy, Michigan farm raised fish.

We've partnered with Coldwater Fisheries, a major player in the North American trout industry that is interested in expanding their markets to the U.S. especially Wisconsin and Chicago and growing healthy Michigan fish to feed Michigan people. This family owned agriculture business was established in 1988 and except brood stock is a fully integrated fish farm from hatchery to grow-out to processing. They produce on average 4-6 million pounds of rainbow trout per year. Their net pen farms expand Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario. They employ 100-120 people.

We remain supportive of the work the Quality of Life departments and the independent science panel have done to date. We support adaptive farming practices and regulation to ensure this is done right. Most importantly, we support rigorous environmental control and scientific analysis to determine the impact net pens would have on Lake Michigan. No one cares more about protecting the great lakes resource than us. We have expressed our sincere willingness to work with the Quality of Life Departments on this process. We've assembled a team that has the farm expertise and private financial capital to execute a controlled pilot and are here to help.

Our pilot project will create 8 direct jobs. It will fit into an established Native American commercial fishing industry, supply chain, and skilled employees. We celebrate each and every job created in our area, as they are vital to maintain the local economy and help us diversity from the vulnerable paper industry.

We ask that you keep in mind we are proposing a controlled pilot effort, to be monitored by the State and more intensely by the local Yoopers. We have tremendous local support from our elected officials, tourism organizations along with others. We remain committed to conducting a science based controlled pilot project to really understand the impact raising healthy Michigan fish to feed Michigan people can provide.

Sincerely yours,



Vicki Schwab  
Executive Director  
Delta County EDA  
230 Ludington Street  
Escanaba, MI 49829  
906-212-5408

cc: Representative Ed McBroom