



SQUAXIN ISLAND TRIBE

THURSTON COUNTY
RECEIVED

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February 10, 2012

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Thurston County Resource Stewardship Department
2000 Lakeridge Drive
Olympia, WA 98502



Re: 961372 SSDP – Taylor Shellfish Company

Thurston County Hearings Examiner:

The Squaxin Island Tribe submits for the record in this matter the following statement in support of the shellfish aquaculture project proposed by Taylor Shellfish Company.

Squaxin Island Tribe is uniquely positioned to offer perspective on aquaculture operations. The Tribe and its members have been involved in modern day aquaculture activities for generations including the cultivation of clams, oysters, and mussels, as well as finfish aquaculture involving various species of salmon.

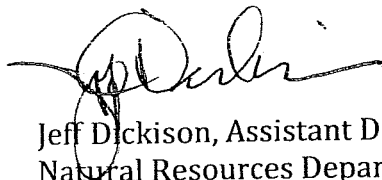
From a longer-term perspective, Tribes have practiced aquacultural activities for thousands of years, always aimed at protecting the resource for future generations. Many of the fish and shellfish aquaculture activities practiced today have their origins in strategies conducted by the ancestral inhabitants of the Puget Sound region.

In addition, the Tribe has labored for many years to protect water quality and improve habitat conditions for aquatic resources in which the Tribe holds rights protected by treaty. The Tribe employs biologists and water quality specialists to monitor the status and trends of water quality in the marine and fresh waterbodies of the Puget Sound region. Through the vigilance of Tribal efforts, many improvements have been made in the local control of pollution sources. Just as a high standard of water quality is essential for the environment as a whole, it is also critical for successful production of food through aquacultural activities. The Tribe relies on these resources for its commercial, subsistence, and ceremonial well-being.

Properly sited aquaculture facilities can be an overall benefit to the marine environment. In fact, it is ironic that mussel rafts have actually been proposed and considered as a way to improve water quality in embayments where poor circulation and point source discharges from sewage treatment plants combine to exceed standards. Mussels and other shellfish capitalize upon the rich and productive waters of Southern Puget Sound. Part of this productivity is natural and some undetermined part is augmented by virtue of the actual discharge of pollutants from man-made sources like septic tanks and farm runoff, also known as non-point pollution. As such, shellfish populations are a regulating species, helping to consume and control excess nutrients added to the water from other sources.

The Tribe has monitored water quality effects from aquaculture activities for many years. Often, when there is an alteration of environmental conditions it represents an improvement. The same cannot be said about shoreline development. It is unfortunate that many shoreline property owners, often the most vociferous in their opposition to aquacultural activities, also are the most significant contributors of nonpoint pollution to the marine environment. It is for this very reason that the Tribe supports the Taylor Shellfish project. Maintaining a high standard for water quality is essential for aquaculture and acts as a deterrent to the more onerous types of shoreline development. If only all our neighbors were shellfish farms, our resources would be in much better shape.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Dickison", written over a horizontal line.

Jeff Dickison, Assistant Director
Natural Resources Department
Squaxin Island Tribe