

September 26, 2023

Chairman Hunt, Ranking Member Gluesenkamp Perez, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kathleen Nisbet Moncy and I am the Chief Organizing Officer of Goose Point Oysters.

Our company is located in the heart of Willapa Bay Washington where we farm 2,000 acres of privately owned tidelands. Willapa Bay is one of 2 coastal estuaries in Washington that produces 25% of the nation's oysters with thriving export markets. The shellfish industry from Willapa Bay and the surrounding region generates tremendous economic impact. As the largest private employer in Pacific County, local shellfish farmers here and in Grays Harbor are responsible for nearly 2,000, rural, family-wage jobs, and contribute \$102 million in economic output to our region. While shellfish farmers are the largest private employer in Pacific County, we still have one of the highest unemployment rates in our state. Shellfish farming in Washington State predates statehood. The tidelands where we farm are locally owned and passed down from generation to generation, one of the families has been farming for 150 years. We serve as ecological stewards keeping the water clean and protecting the sustainability of our farms. We are the backbone of our rural communities from jobs to kids in our local schools, shellfish farming is not just a livelihood, it's our way of life.

The ecosystem in which we farm is of utmost importance to us, as shellfish farmers depend on clean water and a healthy habitat. A single submerged oyster will filter seven gallons of water an hour which means farmers must protect the water while their oysters help to purify it. We are dedicated to managing the health of the ecosystem we farm in and as a result are regarded as one of the healthiest estuaries in the U.S. The impact to our delicate ecosystem with one oil spill would be devastating to our industry.

I would promote stricter regulations on offshore energy no matter the company size. Our oceans are delicate environments and ocean acidification is a real issue shellfish farmers face. We have been struggling with ocean acidification since 2008 and it will continue to worsen for the foreseeable future based on the amount of carbon dioxide we are putting into the atmosphere. The negative impacts due to ocean acidification are pH shifts, lack of calcium in the water and harmful algal blooms. We must fight to protect our waters and learn to evolve with the changes without adding anymore complications with offshore energy. Along with more stringent regulations for offshore energy there must be adequate funds set aside for any disasters that may arise. The Gulf was not prepared for the oil spill and the shellfish industry is still impaired due to it, we should learn from the mistakes made and ensure that they don't happen again.

Besides the biological issues that would arise with offshore energy our location does not have adequate services to respond to an oil spill. Our bay's waterways have not been properly managed by the Army Corps of Engineers and pose a danger for any type of response team. There is no positive scenario for our delicate ecosystem if there were to be a spill.

Along with the impacts to shellfish in our coastal estuaries we must also consider the Dungeness crab and salmon fishing communities. Shellfish tidelands are the rearing habitat for Dungeness crab and salmon. Dungeness crab fishing grounds are directly located off the Washington and Oregon coast. The access to current fishing grounds is already limited and further limitations would risk the livelihood of the fleet and the communities that process and sell the seafood. The cumulative impacts to the fishing

grounds make it near impossible for future generations to be successful in the fishing industry. We should be focused on increasing seafood produced in the U.S. instead of polluting the very waters that provide it.

In conclusion, I do not support reduced regulations of offshore energy at the risk of the livelihoods of our rural communities. Shellfish is a sustainable seafood that has a huge benefit to the ecosystem by purifying the waters, reducing carbon and providing essential ecosystem services to the estuaries in which they are farmed. Our fishing communities must retain the available fishing grounds for the success of their industry. We must stand up and protect our waters from contamination and be responsible stewards of these delicate ecosystems for future generations.

Thank you for your time and considering the impact on rural communities.