

My name is David Ryan. My wife and I live in Ocean Park. My education and experience is as a forester and a natural resource manager. I have experience in managing for habitat and I support the Willapa Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association proposal to manage burrowing shrimp.

I have spoken with representatives from the shellfish industry, scientists, community members, and I have read the reports. The more I learn, the more I know that the oyster growers have done their due diligence and are working to find the best path to a healthy bay. I understand what Imidicloprid is and what it does. I understand the concerns around its use. I have all those same concerns. And I know that the oyster growers have those concerns too.

For many human illnesses doctors prescribe medicines that are, technically toxic, yet people ingest and inject these toxins with the understanding that, in the right doses and applied in the right way, the body will be better. My research indicates that the proposed formulations, application methods, concentrations, coverage areas, timing, and monitoring protocols are all adequate mitigation for the issues surrounding its use. And I believe that the result will be a healthy and balanced ecosystem.

I believe a healthy oyster industry is indicative of a healthy bay. And when it comes to stewardship of the bay, the shellfish industry has proven themselves to be among the most conscientious and dedicated stewards this community could hope for. They are out there more than anyone and they are the best monitors of the bay, its condition, and changes to the environment. They are fine stewards using good science and I support their efforts.

(This issue goes beyond a matter of native vs. non-native.) This issue is about ecosystem function, ecosystem balance, and ecosystem health. The current burrowing shrimp populations are symptomatic of an unbalanced ecosystem which, if left unchecked, will lead to a degraded and unhealthy bay. I want a healthy bay and I know the oyster growers do too. A “no-action” alternative is unacceptable. And we must find solutions that maintain on-bottom oyster growing as a viable sector of the county economy and ecology. The current proposal is our best chance right now, and we don’t have time to delay any more.

In the early half of the twentieth century, Aldo Leopold travelled through the west. He addressed the laissez faire attitude he encountered regarding cheatgrass. And although he writes of cheatgrass, I believe the same principle applies here. He says:

“I listened for clues whether the West has accepted cheat as a necessary evil to be lived with until kingdom come, or whether it regards cheat as a challenge to rectify past land use.

I found the hopeless attitude almost universal. There is, as yet, no sense of pride in the husbandry of wild plants and animals, no sense of shame in the proprietorship of a sick landscape.

We tilt windmills in behalf of conservation in halls and editorial offices, but on the back forty we disclaim even owning a lance”

I see the oyster growers fighting on the back forty, taking pride in their husbandry and I, for one, will not disclaim ownership of a lance. I take mine up and stand with the oyster growers as they fight for their livelihoods and a healthy bay ecosystem. I do not want to feel the shame of allowing a sick landscape to become our legacy. They have fought this fight before with spartina and I hope we will help them do it again with burrowing shrimp. It’s the right thing to do and I urge everyone to support their proposal. Thank you.

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