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**Committee of Advisors  
to the  
Great Lakes Fishery Commission**



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For Immediate Release**

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**FISHERY ADVISORS CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE REGULATIONS PRIOR TO  
EXPANSION OF NET PEN AQUACULTURE IN THE GREAT LAKES**

*Binational advisory committee to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission  
concerned with potential impacts to the fishery from net pen aquaculture*

**Grand Rapids, MI**—The U.S. and Canadian Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission recently passed a resolution calling for the Great Lakes States and Provinces to enact comprehensive regulations regarding proposed net pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes basin.

Aquaculture is the cultivation of fish in controlled environments, such as net pens that sit in open Great Lakes waters. Such operations are seen as providing economic benefits. However, dangers to the surrounding natural environment are also present, including fish borne disease transmissions, waste production and control, fish escapement, and genetic diluting of wild fish strains through unintended interbreeding. Net pen aquaculture already exists on a limited basis in the Great Lakes basin, notably several small fish farming operations in Ontario waters of northern Lake Huron. The resolution was in response to the State of Michigan's current process to consider the economic potential and possible impacts of establishing net pen aquaculture in Michigan waters of the Great Lakes. The resolution was passed during the Commission's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 10-11, 2015. A copy is available online at [http://www.glfc.org/staff/resol2015\\_2.pdf](http://www.glfc.org/staff/resol2015_2.pdf).

Dr. Tom Whillans of Trent University, the chair of the Canadian Committee of Advisors, said, "This resolution calls upon states and provinces to perform advance due diligence and institute comprehensive, effective regulations ahead of approving any net pen aquaculture facilities in the Great Lakes basin. Although advisors believe net pen aquaculture is not inherently harmful if it is done correctly, we are concerned about governments approving such operations without undertaking appropriate and reasonable study to prevent harm to the Great Lakes."

"The advisors recognize the potential economic benefit of aquaculture systems," added Captain Denny Grinold of the Michigan Charterboat Association, the chair of the U.S. Committee of Advisors. "However, the numerous issues that have plagued net pen aquaculture in other parts of the world could irreparably damage our Great Lakes and the \$7 billion fishery if governments are too quick to approve operations in our Great Lakes."

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*The Committee of Advisors consists of both U.S. and Canadian representatives, from First Nation, commercial, recreational, academic, agency, and public fishery interests in the Great Lakes Basin. Advisors provide advice to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission; U.S. advisors are nominated by the State Governors, and appointed by the commission. Canadian advisors are nominated by the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources and appointed by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.*



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**A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL CONSIDERATION AND  
REGULATION OF NET PEN AQUACULTURE IN THE GREAT LAKES**

**WHEREAS**, interest in the concept of net pen aquaculture as an activity of economic benefit to states and provinces in the Great Lakes system has arisen in recent years;

**WHEREAS**, private funded efforts have already established or are in the planning process of establishing net pen aquaculture sites in both Canadian and U.S waters of the Great Lakes;

**WHEREAS**, increased aquaculture activity within the U.S. waters of the Great Lakes has the potential to provide substantial economic benefit to the communities of the Great Lakes watershed;

**WHEREAS**, net pen aquaculture in both North America and the rest of the world has shown a need for extensive regulation to prevent serious disease out breaks among fish raised within said net pens, as well as wild fish that share the watershed with net pen raised fish;

**WHEREAS**, waste by product removal has proven to be a serious concern with net pen aquaculture operations throughout the world;

**WHEREAS**, the issue of fugitive fish escapement from net pens has become a serious problem in other aquaculture facilities throughout the world, leading to aquatic invasive species issues, as well as the genetic diluting of same specie wild fish stocks;

**WHEREAS**, the Province of Ontario has instituted comprehensive regulations pertaining to the establishment and operation of net pen aquaculture in the Canadian waters of the Great Lakes; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Michigan has initiated due diligence as to the economic, cultural and environmental consequences of net pen aquaculture in the Michigan waters of the Great Lakes.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, the U.S. and Canadian Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission call on Great Lakes Fishery Commission to encourage all Great Lakes jurisdictions to thoroughly investigate the impacts of net pen aquaculture—through a comprehensive regulatory, social (including public meetings with stakeholders, citizens, and tribes and First Nations), economic, and scientific assessment—and prior to any approval of said operations, institute appropriate legislation and regulations to protect the Great Lakes from the consequences of unregulated net pen aquaculture.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Commissioners request that Council of Great Lakes Fishery Agencies adhere to provisions of A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries that require signatory agencies to discuss and seek consensus on any fishery activity that has the potential to affect another jurisdiction.

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**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Commissioners support the establishment of a scientific committee under appropriate auspices to monitor basin-wide issues relating to net pen aquaculture and to resolve potential multi-jurisdictional issues regarding the same.

Passed unanimously by U.S. and Canadian Committee of Advisors

June 10, 2015

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