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International Federation of FLY FISHERS

Conserving, Restoring, Educating Through Fly Fishing

**Testimony on House Bill 5255 Prohibiting Net Pen Aquaculture
in the Great Lakes presented to the Michigan House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources**

February 2, 2016

Chairwoman LaFontaine and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee in support of HB 5255. My name is David Peterson and I am Vice President for Conservation for the Great Lakes Council of the International Federation of Fly Fishers. The Great Lakes Council represents the interests of fly fishing anglers in Michigan, Indiana and Northwest Ohio. First, I would like to recognize Representative Jon Bumstead for his leadership in introducing HB 5255. He clearly recognizes that the establishment of net pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes would be disastrous for the State of Michigan and our Great Lakes.

The Board of Directors of the GLC is unequivocally opposed to the establishment of cage pen fish farms in the Great Lakes and fully supports HB 5255. We also want to emphasize the critical need for legislation to address the threats presented by the establishment of flow through fish growing operations on rivers like the one proposed for the AuSable River. Simply put, the risks to our cold water resources are too great to turn our Great Lakes and pristine trout streams into experimental sites for aquaculture.

The risks of these fish farms include: 1) escapement of farmed fish and subsequent degradation of wild fish genetics; 2) excessive amounts of fish waste and accompanying nutrients polluting our Great Lakes and stream habitats; and 3) the risk of disease spreading from farmed fish to wild stocks which has occurred in other fish farming operations.

Michigan is blessed with the world's greatest supply of fresh water through our Great Lakes and is home to some of the world's iconic trout streams. We cannot comprehend why our state would experiment with unproven fish farming technologies that hold the potential to damage these irreplaceable natural resources and place our sport fishery and tourism industry at risk. While aquaculture may have a future in Michigan it should pursue that future using proven closed loop recirculating systems that are based on land.

Invasive species and other environmental threats already challenge our lakes and streams. We should not allow another threat to our greatest resource. We urge your strong endorsement of HB 5255.

Respectfully submitted,

David Peterson
Vice President for Conservation
Great Lakes Council of the International Federation of Fly Fishers