

Portland, ME– Sierra Club Maine Executive Committee voted unanimously on Saturday to oppose construction of Nordic Aqua Farm Inc. (NAF). As currently proposed it poses a significant and unreasonable risk to the environment and economy of Penobscot Bay and the Midcoast Maine communities. The giant land-based salmon farm will lie in Belfast and Northport, and proposes to draw 1200 gallons per minute of fresh water from the local aquifer and release 7.7 million gallons of waste water a day into Penobscot Bay.

The Sierra Club Maine calls for further transparency in environmental impact studies, with full disclosure of the chemical nature of the wastewater discharge, and the future oversight of claims including limited antibiotic use, non-GMO feed, and water treatment. The project poses an unknowable threat to the environment as well as marine life and people who live in an around the Bay and rely on the Bay to sustain their lives and livelihoods. Furthermore, no permit should be issued while the applicant is still working on details.

“Nordic Aqua Farms proposes 100 or fewer jobs, and promises no environmental damage yet refuses to release any scientific data to back up their promises” said Sierra Club Maine Chapter Director Alice Elliott. “Do we know the impact of pumping 750 up to 7.7 million gallons a day of waste water into the Bay? Is there scientific consensus that this volume of partially treated, brackish water will not impact the lobster and other fisheries that provide livelihoods for so many in the area? Nordic threatens the health and well being of countless existing jobs, for the promise of a few jobs.”

The excessive use and disposal of fresh and saltwater resources proposed by this facility is unreasonable for any single entity or project. Furthermore, NAF's proposal regarding the donation of 80 acres of regional coastal lands into a land trust in exchange for full permitting of the project fails to mitigate the environmental threats to coastal water quality.

Members of the Executive Committee cited general concerns about the carbon-footprint of fish farming, and pondered why a second NAF land-based salmon farm planned near Eureka, California is designed to be a recirculating aquaculture, calling for little to no waste discharged.

The Sierra Club Maine encourages concerned citizens to attend and demand further transparency about the environmental impact of this project as proposed at a public information session on Tuesday, March 26 at the Hutchinson Center in Belfast. A prior information session can be seen online <https://vimeo.com/256895024>.

For further comments from the Sierra Club Maine Chapter please contact Chapter Director Alice Elliot at (207) 761-5616.



NEWS RELEASE

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Sierra Club Maine votes to oppose Nordic Aquafarms' project based on grave factual errors and unsubstantiated claims.

PORTLAND, Maine -- On March 26th, 2019 the Maine Executive Committee of the Sierra Club (SC) issued a press release opposing the NAF project in Belfast. The press release clearly reflects a lack of due diligence. The decision to oppose the project was based on grave factual errors that easily could have been avoided by attending our meetings, reading our permit applications or reaching out to us for clarifications.

The Nordic Aquafarms project in Maine has benefitted from dialogue and support from reputable environmental organizations in the US. A number of these have conducted scientific peer reviews of our discharge application. These include the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, The Conservation Law Foundation and the Atlantic Salmon Federation. Their letters of support were submitted to the DEP environmental authorities in Maine, USA.

We will address SC's most substantial claims one by one:

SC claims that we are withdrawing 1200 gallons of water from the local aquifer

As was stated in our public information meeting on March 26, 2019, we will withdraw a maximum of 450 gallons/minute. Extensive testing and modelling have been conducted and will be submitted with our applications. Strict and transparent monitoring programs will ensure that our company never withdraws more than sustainable levels.

SC is calling for full transparency on environmental impacts studies and claims that NAF refuses to release any scientific data to support its claims

Nordic Aquafarms has submitted an extensive documentation package to the environmental authorities in Maine on this subject matter, prepared with the assistance of local expert resources in Maine. It shows that our company complies with, and in many cases exceeds, the requirements of the environmental authorities. There are no toxins or metals in our discharge as we are producing a pure food product.

In addition, our company, as any other, must comply with requirements in issued permits. Our residual discharge will be subject to third party monitoring programs, as we expect any discharger in Maine should be.

SC claims that Nordic Aquafarms' discharge threatens the health and well-being of countless existing jobs, for the promise of a few jobs and that the excessive use and disposal of fresh and saltwater resources proposed by this facility is unreasonable for any single entity or project.

Our company is not pumping 7.7 million gallons of waste into the Penobscot Bay as SC claims. The majority of this water comes from the Bay and is rigorously treated before it is returned to the Bay. Our removal of nutrients exceeds existing treatment standards in Maine today, with several parameters in the return water being below existing background values in the Bay.

SC ponders why we are proposing a RAS system in California with little or no waste discharged!

SC is clearly not up to date on our recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) technologies, as they are claiming we are employing different solutions in California. The same technology will be employed in both Maine and California, with 99 percent water recirculation in our systems. They are correct that our California project will have a very low waste discharge, but that is also the case in Maine. Both projects uphold the same high environmental standards.

SC presents an unsubstantiated claim that we have a high CO² footprint

As for carbon footprint, SC does not explain their claim that our project has an unreasonable CO² footprint. In fact, our carbon footprint is significantly lower than all fresh finfish seafood alternatives airfreighted into the US today, as we have addressed a number of times in public. Meanwhile, CO² emissions in the US increased by 3.4 percent last year, the highest increase in eight years¹. SC should focus their efforts on the material sources of CO², not companies working to reduce the CO² footprint for US consumers.

SC claims that NAF's proposal regarding the donation of 80 acres of regional coastal lands into a land trust is in exchange for full permitting of the project.

Our offer to donate funds for preservation of recreational lands in Belfast, is not a premise for our applications in Maine. The donation is part of our overall effort as an environmental company making numerous contributions in Maine, also including our effort to provide bait to the lobster industry.

Finally, it is reasonable to ask why the Sierra Club is singling out our company when there are a number of land-based seafood projects in progress in Maine and in the US. Our documented environmental standards are the highest in the industry, and we have a track-record in the land-based seafood industry.

Our company has prided itself on working with professional environmental organizations to craft solutions that protect our environment. Our company has also received a number of prestigious environmental awards for our work from the EU, Norwegian Government and the Danish Government. We encourage the Sierra Club to pursue dialogue with us and others in the business world, and to care about the facts. That is how we can move forward and solve serious environmental challenges the US is facing, together.

1: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/08/climate/greenhouse-gas-emissions-increase.html>

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