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## **Oregon's Sustainable Seafood Industry in Jeopardy Amid Unachievable DEQ Permit Limits**

*Frustrations mount during the Aug. 30 public hearing where the community urged DEQ to resolve technical issues and work with the seafood industry.*

Aug. 31, 2023 – Astoria, Ore. – Ongoing challenges with Oregon DEQ's new seafood wastewater permits reached a critical juncture on Aug. 30, during the public hearing for Da Yang Seafood's recently-published draft permit. This permit will set regulatory standards for Oregon's seafood processing industry – standards that industry wastewater experts agree are impossible to achieve with existing technology. Without a path to compliance, not only is Oregon's seafood industry in jeopardy, but the economic viability of coastal communities is threatened.

For example, under DEQ's new permit regime, seafood processors are expected to treat their water for metals like copper that originate from the municipal water supply to levels thousands of times lower than drinking water. Because these metals are not used or produced by the seafood industry, technology does not exist for seafood processors to treat the water to the levels required in the permit. No other state – nor any other country in the world – has applied requirements for metals like these to seafood processors.

“Despite years of persistent efforts by the seafood processing industry to engage in productive conversations, DEQ's responses have been inconsistent, superficial, and devoid of practical solutions,” said Lori Steele, Executive Director for West Coast Seafood Processors Association. “While the industry has invested extensively in independent research, DEQ's refusal to engage with our technical experts further indicates the Agency is rushing to reduce the permit backlog at the expense of doing it right.”

During this week's public hearing, several community and industry members urged DEQ to listen to industry scientists and resolve all technical problems in the permit before finalizing any drafts or issuing future permits. Select comments from the hearing are included below.

The public comment period on the draft Da Yang permit is open until Sept. 28. West Coast Seafood Processors developed a website to share the most recent information and mobilize community support around this crisis. To learn more about the campaign and to quickly submit a public comment, we urge the public to visit [SaveOregonSeafood.org](http://SaveOregonSeafood.org).

### **Public Comments Made During Hearing:**

- **Sen. Suzanne Weber (OR-16):** “As things currently stand, I see the new wastewater discharge permits as overly complicated, and do not fully consider the nature of the seafood processing industry. Further, should these standards remain unchanged, it seems it would hinder production, and not allow for the full use of our fishing resources which we have been blessed in our state. I strongly urge DEQ to please collaborate with the people who are going to be applying for these permits, and for the purposes of this evening's hearing, namely Da Yang Seafood.”
- **Lori Steele—West Coast Seafood Processors Association:** “This permit renewal process represents an important opportunity to modernize the permitting and regulatory landscape for the seafood processing industry so our industry can become more resilient and adapt to increasingly challenging and constantly-changing conditions. The draft individual permit for Da Yang Seafood

fails to accomplish this. Fundamentally, the draft permit is based on outdated parameters and imposes infeasible and unworkable requirements. It is exceedingly-complicated, overly-restrictive, and the proposed limits are not tailored to Da Yang's processing operations. It also disincentivizes recycling and encourages less than 100% utilization of fisheries resources, which is completely contrary to our industry's values, as well as DEQ's own goals to promote reuse and recycling."

- **Alan Ismond – AquaTerra Consultants/Da Yang Seafood:** "DEQ is supposed to assign allowable limits for all products and species. DEQ refuses to promulgate a TBEL for Pet Food production for no valid reason. This refusal penalizes companies who want to process a new species or make a new by-product. Da Yang has gone above and beyond in researching and testing technologies without knowing the permit target limits until last month. This company is focused on 21<sup>st</sup> century solutions that are more protective to the environment overall (land, water, air) while maximizing the recovery of the seafood resource."
- **Kurt Englund – President Englund Marine Supply:** "The seafood industry is a major economic driver for many of Oregon's small, coastal communities. When it's negatively impacted the hurt is felt well beyond the processors, fishermen and support businesses. Most businesses in these communities will feel the impacts, as well as the many governmental taxing entities. Due to our geographic location, it is very difficult to attract new industries to the coast so we must ensure our existing ones are allowed to thrive. We are asking DEQ to reconsider its approach, and re-engage with Da Yang, and the entire seafood processing industry, to work out a reasonable and economically viable water quality permit system."
- **Heather Mann— Midwater Trawlers Cooperative:** "I sit on the board of a national seafood organization where my colleagues in other states are simply aghast at what DEQ is attempting to do. No other seafood-processing state in the US is forcing seafood processors to comply with such unrealistic rules. Requiring water to be magnitudes cleaner than drinking water is simply outrageous and unnecessary. When the technology does not exist to comply with these rules it makes many of us wonder if DEQ is really just interested in eliminating Oregon's seafood industry. Just saying you don't want to eliminate the industry isn't comforting when DEQ continues to plow forward with regulations that will eliminate Oregon's seafood processors and everyone who is associated with wild-caught seafood."
- **Yelena Nowak— Oregon Trawl Commission:** "Just as fishermen, seafood processors are an integral part of this industry. Processors need fishermen to get product out of the water. Fishermen need processors to sell their catch to consumers. Processors each support hundreds of workers whom they employ directly as filleters, warehouse workers, drivers, office staff, etc. Processors also support a fleet of independently owned fishing vessels who sell their catch to them. With a typical crew size of 3 people, each vessel in turn supports 3 households. Then, there is also the support industry which includes gear manufacturers, supply stores, bait shops, boat yards, etc. Our industry will be in jeopardy if DEQ goes forward with the Da Yang's draft permit without first addressing processors' concerns. As it stands right now, this draft permit is unattainable, unworkable, unfair, and it will automatically lead to noncompliance of seafood processors."

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**About West Coast Seafood Processors Association:** Headquartered in Astoria, Oregon, the West Coast Seafood Processors Association (WCSPA) was founded in 1993 by a group of seafood processors who realized that no other organization existed exclusively to deal with the problems and challenges facing shore-based seafood processors in Washington, Oregon, and California. Since then, WCSPA has grown to represent most major, and many minor, shore-based processors of groundfish, crab, shrimp, and salmon. WCSPA represents the vast majority of seafood processors impacted by overly-restrictive and infeasible wastewater permit requirements imposed by DEQ in the state of Oregon.