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Chairmen, Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today to address the need for an new aquaculture plan for MN.

My name is Barry Thoele and my company Lincoln Bait has operated in MN since 1987.

As a Wholesale Bait Dealer for over 35 years, and fish farm owner for over 23 of those years in MN, as I see it, we are faced with a dilemma in the Bait industry in MN.

The wild resource we have relied on for decades is failing us, Invasive species and parasites have furthered the decline of that resource. And with it our ability to provide the baitfish needed for fishing. Widespread shortages were seen this winter of several of the best-known baitfish.

Aquaculture is the answer to those shortages. To provide enough bait to fishermen and for the forage market that benefits MN businesses and provides opportunities in and for MN.

I have worked diligently for decades to find ways to grow baitfish for MN in MN. We now have a better knowledge of these species than ever before. Bringing the industry into the modern age will require help, education, and investment to provide opportunities for new businesses and new jobs.

I thank you for the opportunity to present my perspective and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions and address any concerns you may have.

Barry Thoele
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