



## Women's Environmental Institute at Amador Hill

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Dear Senators

My name is Karen Clark. I am honored to briefly address this Senate Agricultural Committee. Today I want to urge you pass an issue near and dear to my heart—SF 2235/HF2391, the bill that funds a comprehensive statewide planning process for Minnesota to develop our aquaculture industry.

I specifically speak today as the Volunteer Executive Director of the Women's Environmental Institute (WEI), an organization I helped found back in 2003 and also as a Board Member of the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute, a community-based organization working to create a year-round indoor urban farm in South Minneapolis in which several type of aquaponics will be featured.

Since its earliest beginnings, WEI has embraced aquaculture as one important strategy for “food security” for culturally and racially diverse, low-income families—**both rural and urban**. Each year WEI offers a 7-8 month course on how to grow yellow perch, from fingerlings to mature fish on a small scale that can enable a family to grow this rich, clean protein source for themselves, sometimes in their home basement, or in a small community center with neighbors, or on a family farm. WEI grows our fish in a hoophouse year-round that is approximately 25' X 50', heated by passive solar and supplemented with a wood burning furnace or propane in winter.

We teach participants how to build an affordable version of a closed loop aquaculture structure. That structure includes the fish tank plus two higher levels of vegetable beds that grow produce using the fish waste in the circulating water for nutrients, while cleaning the recirculating water that is returned to the fish tank in the process. No waste water is created. Currently we plan to build both a low-tech and a high-tech aquaponics system in our East Phillips urban farming center. WEI is also working with Nawayee Center School where Native American high-schoolers are learning to construct their own aquaponics structure within their school facility and then will learn how to grow this important fresh and nutritious food source for themselves, their families, their community. We are confident these students are learning a job skill that will be in demand as Minnesota's aquaculture industry continues to expand.

I want to leave you with this thought. Aquaculture can be a small **rural** farm family enterprise, or it can be designed as an **urban** family or community-based business. It can be small and low-tech or larger and high-tech with many employees. It can be a rural, urban or suburban enterprise.

It is my earnest hope that each of these opportunities will be part of the MN state aquaculture plan and can help provide our culturally, racially, and income diverse population important economic, public health and food security benefits. Please support SF 2235/HF 2391 and help us grow Minnesota's aquaculture plan today.

Many thanks! Karen Clark