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Full Statement:

Mr. Chairmen, members of the committee,

My name is Barry Thoele, I own and operate Lincoln Bait LLC. In Staples Minnesota. I am the Baitfish representative for the Minnesota Aquaculture Association, and to DNR through the MNAA.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the need for a proactive Aquaculture Association, and the need for funding to establish and foster Aquaculture and an updated Aquaculture plan for MN.

I have been in the wholesale bait business in MN for over 32 years and in aquaculture for over 25 of those years. I built a fish farm in Staples MN with 13 ponds, 3 raceway spawning system, 7000 sq. ft. of hydroponic greenhouses, and 1 aquaponic research greenhouse. Dedicated to baitfish and locally grown food in central MN I also raise produce for hospitals, school districts and local sales. I am currently working on LCCMR funded research directed at producing Golden Shiners (a well-known baitfish) in modified systems for aquaculture and aquaponics to address current baitfish shortages and the future needs in MN.

I speak from a different aspect of aquaculture. Baitfish aquaculture. Which is currently the most prevalent form aquaculture in practiced in Minnesota. And currently reliant primarily on wild ponds in throughout the state.

Baitfish support the greater MN tourism economy. Fishing and tourism go hand in hand in MN. Providing millions of dollars in revenue and thousands of jobs throughout the state.

The presence of invasive species has severely limited the ability of the bait industry in MN and will further limit access to the resources the bait industry has depended on for over 60 years to grow and harvest the baitfish, Minnesota, and tourist anglers use every day in MN lakes and rivers. Drought too, has greatly affected the amount of water available and the quantity of baitfish those waters can produce.

Shortages of thousands of gallons and millions of baitfish are occurring now and will likely get worse without a plan of action and funding directed to help support aquaculture in MN, and baitfish, in particular, from my perspective. Millions of dollars in revenues are lost due baitfish shortages across the state. And the answer is not importing bait from outside the state. But growing it here free of potential new invasive species that could further limit availability to the wild resources in the future. Land of 10000 lakes should be able to produce enough baitfish for our own needs. I also would ask your assistance to persuade the University of Minnesota to open more opportunities for extension experts, and for more directed research into aquaculture and new avenues to produce any number of aquaculture and aquaponic products that will make MN more sustainable. Bringing more opportunities,

for and to, small businesses and innovation in what is now becoming a shrinking industry due to outside influences and invasive species.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to present today. I am open and available to discuss the needs and impending changes the future of baitfish aquaculture holds in Minnesota.

Thank you.