

**PRE-FILED TESTIMONY OF GEF FLIMLIN
ON BEHALF OF THE FISH ARE OKAY
IN THE MATTER OF NORDIC AQUAFARMS, INC., APPLICATIONS
(TFAO 4)**

WITNESS BACKGROUND AND QUALIFICATIONS:

I am George R. (Gef) Flimlin. My wife and I have recently built a home at 52 Perkins Road in Belfast, the back property line of which adjoins along its full length the proposed Nordic Aquafarms' project site.

I am testifying today on behalf of The Fish Are Okay. This is a citizen-based nonprofit organization that has put considerable effort over the past year into keeping our neighborhood (as well as other concerned citizens in Belfast and surrounding communities) up-to-date on issues and actions related to the Nordic project.

I have recently retired as Professor Emeritus from Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey. I have been involved with commercial fisheries and aquaculture for about 40 years. I served as a Marine Extension Agent for the Rutgers Cooperative Extension. That position is very much like the County Agricultural Agent who works with farmers, but I worked with commercial fishermen and aquaculturists.

I served on the Technical Advisory Committee for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center on and off for about 18 years, ending as the Chair of that committee. I was on the Executive Committee as well as Vice President of the National Shellfisheries Association. I was on the Board and served as the President of the U.S. Aquaculture Society. That position also put me on the Executive Board of the World Aquaculture Society. I was on the International Conference for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) Aquaculture Work Group, working with scientists and regulators from Canada and the European Union on aquaculture research priorities. I was the founder of the New Jersey Aquaculture Association and co-founder of the East Coast Shellfish Growers' Association. So I know a little bit about aquaculture.

Over the past two years my wife and I have become fulltime residents of Belfast. It was during this time that we learned the home we were building on property we purchased many years ago was to have a new neighbor -- Nordic's proposed salmon farm, firmly abutting the entire length of our new homesite. The irony and humor in this situation was not lost upon friends, family and my professional peers from around the world.

We've laughed along with them, although to be honest, this wasn't the best news I've had since my retirement from Rutgers. And in the meantime, it became apparent that the political dynamics within our new neighborhood in Belfast were destined to complicate this news even further. We learned that two neighbors are the founders respectively of Local Citizens for SMART Growth: Salmon Farm, a nonprofit organization for the purpose of opposing the Nordic project, as well as Upstream Watch, another nonprofit that shares this goal. Nonetheless, it is my wife and I who will likely be the most extensively impacted by Nordic's construction and operations. A 40-foot wooded buffer strip is all that separates our property from the building that will house Nordic's core production activities.

So we are right there. And after 40 years of promoting aquaculture, I really can't be the "Not In My Backyard" guy.

SITE/NRPA APPLICATIONS WITH RESPECT TO IMPACTS TO EXISTING USES FROM CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONS, INCLUDING BLASTING AND ODOR:

I contacted Erik Heim at Nordic about 10 days after the announcement was made about the possibility of the fish farm being built at this site. I told him who I was, what I did, and that if he failed it would not only be bad for his company, but for aquaculture in general, so he better get it right. He certainly concurred. Since then I have met with him and his engineer many times. I've asked questions about the facility and how things would work. They have been straightforward with their answers. Aside from these newly developing relationships with Nordic's folks, I count 4 aquaculture engineers as friends of long standing. Two literally "wrote the book" on Recirculating Aquaculture Systems, and I've not hesitated over the past two years to contact them and others for insight into Nordic's design plans.

Professional curiosity alone would have driven me to investigate Nordic's plans for design and operations, but this wasn't all that I had in mind. My wife and I were also in the process of getting to know our new neighbors, some of whom think the Nordic facility will be a great asset to Belfast, and others who appear to be prepared to go to any extreme to prevent the fish farm from being built. In my mind, all opinions are fair until facts and/or actual experience proves them wrong. I felt I had the training and experience to sort out at least some of these issues in advance of the deadline for making decisions. If nothing else, my wife and I needed to be satisfied that we'd examined all the angles.

So what better place to start than asking Nordic about our own property, our needs, our expectations?

Odor: A bad odor at an aquaculture facility is a dead give-away that poor management is resulting in bad husbandry, resulting in compromised equipment, disease, fish mortality and financial ruin. From my perspective this is an instance in which NIMBYism is fully justified. From conversations with Nordic about their practices, I'm satisfied there will be no whiffs of fish or fish waste reaching my backyard.

Noise: It simply goes with the territory that construction-related noise such as **blasting** will be an annoyance during the construction phase. Nor do local ordinances offer much protection given that blasting is permitted seven days a week between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. The Flimlin household is prepared and willing to endure this disturbance as a necessary trade-off for achieving a locally produced food source grown in an environmentally sound way. I've talked with Nordic's folks about disturbances from construction. It's their intent to be thoughtful about residential neighbors. I don't expect to be thrown from my chair at dinnertime nor blasted from my bed past a reasonable hour.

In fact, both odor and noise were part of my discussion with Erik Heim when we initially met. I told him that I knew the system wasn't going to be loud and that it wasn't going to smell, but that I'd be really ticked off if he ruined my night sky. He responded that he was also a star gazer and that lights at night would not be an issue.

Visual Impact: If I were to be granted my preference in the setback requirements governing required distances between an industrial facility and a residential property, that distance would easily be twice or more the setback required under our municipal Code. Unfortunately, I became involved in the regulatory process too late to influence a change in our existing Code. It is also the case at this specific site that other setback requirements for existing streams create a difficult jigsaw puzzle that allows little flexibility in Nordic's footprint. In the face of this reality, Nordic has gone out of its way to offer help in buffering my property from their operations. I've been given my choice of native plantings for the buffer strip, and we will take them up on their offer when construction begins. Nordic has also agreed to top or remove exceptionally tall trees that would block sunlight if I add solar panels to my roof. All in all, we've had enough on-site, eyes-on discussions about my needs in establishing and managing this buffer strip that I'm more than satisfied with their cooperative attitude. I pass a window factory down the street daily, and it simply blends into our neighborhood. I think this will be the case with Nordic, and I don't expect that in the long run, it will ruin our property value.

I'm satisfied that Nordic intends to be a good neighbor. I'm satisfied overall that Nordic's design concepts and its operational plans are leading toward an environmentally sound operation that achieves sustainability in producing a high quality product. At the core of my satisfaction,

however, is the confidence I have in Maine's Board of Environmental Protection and its staff to thoroughly evaluate Nordic's applications and to monitor ongoing performance toward achieving these goals.

As this process proceeded, I found the thoughts of Local Citizens for SMART Growth: Salmon Farm and of Upstream Watch concerning the ability for the state and federal agencies to get everything right quite naive. I have worked with County, State and Federal Agencies for 40 years and there are some things that I have learned. First, these agencies will accept zero risk. They never want to have lawyers beating down their doors because they overlooked something. This brings them to a second place. Agencies will always fall on the conservative side of any issue rather than on the other. I have worked with applicants over the years who were fuming about all of the information that was required to get a permit to do something. But people who have not gone through these processes have no idea of the intense labor that state agencies must go through to grant a permit. I have constantly heard from those in opposition to this project that Nordic Aquafarms will kill or pollute the bay. What they don't understand is that Nordic cannot get a discharge permit if the effluent exceeds 20% of the assimilative capacity of the receiving waters. That kind of diligence is essential for the maintenance of the bay for decades to come, and it will be the State and Federal government that will demand Nordic's adherence to these parameters. The bottom line is that I find it disturbing and somewhat demeaning to the people in the agencies that those in opposition to this land-based fish farm have so little trust in the people whose mandate it is to keep the bay viable.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I affirm that my testimony is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

By:

Gef Flimlin, on behalf of
The Fish Are Okay

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My Commission Expires June 13, 2020