From:	David Mason
To:	Tasmanian Salmon Study Secretariat
Subject:	Feedback for salmon study
Date:	Saturday, 4 July 2026 3:46:44 PM
Attachments:	Salmon Letter.docx

I attach my letter here with best wishes,

David Mason

3 July 2026

To the Study Leads, Tasmanian Salmon Study:

I write as a concerned citizen opposed to salmon farming in Tasmanian waters. The industry is not sustainable in our warming waters, and has already done immense damage to local industry, tourism and recreation, not to mention harm done to the environment itself and the salmon raised in barbaric conditions.

I have lived in Tasmania since 2018, but I grew up in real wild salmon country, the Pacific Northwest of the US. I was raised on wild-caught salmon, and both my parents worked on Reservations where they learned about the importance of salmon to the Lummi and Makah cultures. There are five types of salmon in those waters: coho, chinook (king), sockeye, pink and chum. The usual pattern of a salmon life is to spend five years in open ocean waters, returning to spawn in coastal rivers at the end of their lives. Over the last century, this life cycle was impeded by dams, pollution and overfishing to the point where it became obvious that something needed to be done to help the salmon and the people who rely on them. Dams have been fitted with salmon ladders allowing the fish to swim upstream, or they have been removed altogether where possible—salmon populations have been revitalized by these gestures. Now Washington State has ended open-net salmon farming in its coastal waters. British Columbia is on course to do the same.

I can tell you that farmed salmon is an inferior product with less flavour than wild-caught fish. It has also been chemically altered to make its appearance more palatable to unsuspecting customers. We also know that, according to the EPA, the Tasmanian salmon farming industry dumped some 5.4 tonnes of Florofenicol in our waterways last summer alone. We know that the antibiotic spreads more widely than originally believed, that it has shown up in lobster and shellfish, causing other fisheries to close. We know that last summer alone some 9,000 tonnes of salmon died in their cages. I witnessed this mass mortality event as foul-smelling globules of salmon fat washed up on my own local beach, Verona Sands. I witnessed employees of the salmon industry trying to hide the evidence of this devastating desecration of our shores. I was there. Photographs my wife and I took on the first day of the disaster ended up in stories about the event published all over Australia.

As I write, I'm looking out my lounge room window at a fleet of salmon cages, and I know that fish evolved to swim freely in open seas are crammed into those cages, that their own waste and the chemicals used to sustain them are smothering the water and seabed beneath them. At night I look directly across the mouth of the Huon to the salmon docks at Surveyor's Bay where the work lights burn brightly. Depending on wind direction, I can often hear the loud drone of the ships and tenders working the salmon nets. These are other forms of pollution harder to quantify, but just as disturbing.

Finally, as a year-round swimmer and snorkeler in these waters, I am convinced that they are in profound ecological distress. The seabird population is nothing like it should be in such a coastal environment, and there are far fewer seals than I used to see regularly in the Pacific Northwest. Our kelp forests—part of the great southern reef with its extraordinarily rich flora—are thinning.

Tasmanian salmon is an inferior product raised in waters unsuited to this species. At the very least, the industry should be reduced in size or relocated on shore. The Tasmanian government should stop subsidising an industry that takes so much and gives so little back to us in the form of taxes that could relieve our funding problems in education, health care and housing.

Arguing that the salmon industry provides jobs is simply short-sighted—a quick fix, and an insufficient one, for problems that are too profound to be ignored. Investment in education, to offer one example, is a far better way to create jobs into the future, strengthening Tasmanian society and inviting other industries here to find an able workforce.

Tasmania has only one asset that sets it above all other states and territories in Australia—its environment. Damage that, and you will have ruined Tasmania now and in generations to come.

Sincerely,

David Mason
Professor Emeritus, The Colorado College
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