

February 11, 2020 at 6 pm

The Board of Environmental Protection: thank god you're here. Belfast's Little River district needs you.

Tonight, rousing myself to leave the warmth of our family's hearth for the chill and slush of a February evening, I think of all those people whom I know won't bother. Simple folk who just want to be left alone to enjoy their comforts, believing that nothing they can say or do will change the minds of the powers-that-be, anyway.

It has been an ugly battle. I won't speak on behalf of either side in the manner of right or wrong. I'm here only to tell you of my own thoughts on the proposed corporate fish project. I am no scientist, but a retired businesswoman. Maine Business School finance professor Bob Strong taught us that before considering what a thing will cost, determine the need.

What is the need here? The bottom line for Nordic Aquafarm is to make money for their shareholders, which they have persuaded local proponents will result in more tax revenue for the city. That's obvious: we could all use more money.

A certain number of environmentalists have been persuaded that the problem addressed is the amount fossil fuels expended by flying fresh salmon from the cold waters of Norway to markets along the eastern seaboard.

But, wait a minute: Solving dubious problems with money-making schemes hasn't worked for us in the past. If you don't believe me, visit the landfill. Real problems, like increasing public transportation, reducing industrial pollution, and our own voracious demand for creature comforts continues, unaddressed. These are our real environmental problems.

Eric Heim has devised an Americanized version of the salmon, a product sequestered in huge tanks and fed meals of whatever the market will bear, flushing the creature's "treated" waste into the Bay. The amount of energy required to circulate the millions of gallons of water around the clock for its years of operation is substantial, and will give this proposed solution its own huge carbon footprint.

We are immersed in our environment and cannot step outside of it; but for scientists and dreamers, we are destined to repeat what has gone before. The past is our gospel, our go-to for safety. How do we correct a course wrought for disaster for our species? Through the Department of Environmental Protection: The Courts: Public opinion. Well, let the correction begin. Young people are demanding it and I stand with them.

Today, we seek wisdom and power of our Board for Environmental Protection. In a nod to the future, help us to say no to this false problem so that we may look to our future for real solutions to the vast real environmental problems that we're facing.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hill