

**Western  
Pacific  
Regional  
Fishery  
Management  
Council**

April 11, 2011

Ms. Susan Bunsick  
NOAA Aquaculture Program  
1315 East-West Highway  
SSMC#3-13th Floor Rm. 13152  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Bunsick,

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on NOAA's Draft Aquaculture Policy. We are grateful for NOAA's first attempt at developing guidelines for offshore aquaculture and that one of NOAA's priorities is to work with the Fishery Management Councils (FMCs) to establish a regulatory program for marine aquaculture in Federal waters. However, the Council feels that policy does not provide enough guidance to FMCs in the development of Fishery Management Plans for aquaculture.

Our Council has had an aquaculture policy in place since 2007 that provides similar guidance to the NOAA Draft Aquaculture Policy, such as preventing escapes, and recommending the raising of native stocks only. This policy only provides guidance to potential aquaculture operations and has no regulatory effect. In 2010, the Council recommended NMFS establish permitting and reporting requirements to provide some monitoring of potential aquaculture operations. The amendment to our FEPs is currently in review, in hopes of the NOAA policy providing additional guidance on the roles and responsibilities of each agency. After review of the draft policy, this is clearly not the case.

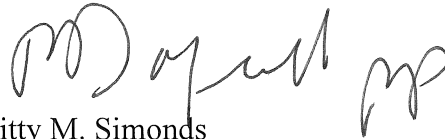
The policy should provide a framework for how aquaculture will be managed under NOAA. It should list out the roles and responsibilities of each agency and provide guidance on permitting and regulations, with the flexibility for regional variances. The policy should also address the following issues:

- Environmental Monitoring-who will be responsible for monitoring of environmental conditions regarding waste, feed, and habitat impacts?
- Ocean Leasing-how will NOAA address the short/long-term use of a public area by a private operation and security concerns from the aquaculture operation? Will NOAA provide the long-term leases that are needed to develop this industry?
- Disaster Contingencies-in the case of a natural or other disaster, who is responsible for clean-up and removal?

Right now, this draft policy does not provide guidance on these issues or for the development and implementation of the Council's recommendations. The draft policy does not address these important issues that fishery managers need now, in order to make sure management safeguards are in place in the event that operations move into the EEZ.

We understand that NOAA is wrestling with these same questions, but it is imperative that the Council receive the proper guidance on regulations as there has been, and continues to be, inquiries into developing different types of aquaculture operations in the EEZ around Hawaii. We hope that the NOAA Final Aquaculture Policy takes into account these comments and includes a framework for how regulations will be developed, so that we can put management measures into place in a manner that will keep wild caught fisheries sustainable and at the same time allow this new type of fishery to expand. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment and if you have any questions, please contact Joshua DeMello of my staff at (808) 522-7493.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kitty M. Simonds', written in a cursive style.

Kitty M. Simonds  
Executive Director