

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2004

Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Ave., N.W.
Room 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Admiral Lautenbacher:

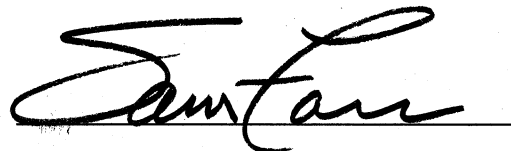
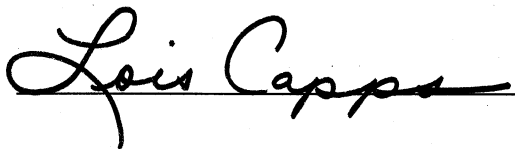
We understand that NOAA Fisheries has drafted legislation to provide authority for ocean finfish aquaculture in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). We are writing to request NOAA first study the environmental impacts of such legislation before transmitting its legislation to Congress, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

While we believe that aquaculture may provide limited opportunity to relieve pressures on native caught fish, it is not a panacea. There are significant environmental impacts that must be fully studied and considered prior to enacting responsible federal legislation to guide this industry in the future. We need substantially better knowledge about possible interactions between aquaculture and natural ocean environments to minimize the potential for habitat degradation, disease transmission, genetic dilution of wild stocks, introduction of invasive species, and discharges of wastes, toxins and excess nutrients.

As you know, NEPA requires an agency proposing legislation to prepare a legislative environmental impact statement (LEIS). This is a critical way to provide better information to decision makers and to give the public an opportunity to receive notice about the legislation and provide comments. We believe this process would be valuable to both NOAA and Congress in weighing the benefits, impacts and consequences associated with aquaculture, particularly in light of the recent work of the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

We would further appreciate a timely response to this letter indicating your commitment to undergo this LEIS and a timetable for its completion.

Sincerely,



Michael Mthanda

Willy DeLak

Jim McDermott

Eul Blumenauer

George Miller

Bob Filner

Barnes Lunk

Peter DeFazio

Frank Pallone Jr.

J. Ah

Sina Zshoo

Mich Simpson

Edward J. Markey

Rosa L. / Pan