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Ms. Elizabeth Sablad
Environmental Scientist
US EPA Region 9
75 Hawthorne Street
(WTR-5)
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: **NEPA Review for Rose Canyon Fisheries Sustainable Aquaculture Project**

Ms. Sablad,

I am writing to offer my support for the Rose Canyon Fisheries (RCF) application for permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to operate a commercial aquaculture farm in our nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the coast of San Diego.

Since I am a director of Pacific Ocean Fresh Inc., a subsidiary of Hubbs SeaWorld and one of the partners in Rose Canyon Fisheries, I obviously have a natural bias in favor of the project, but it also means that I know it and the individuals involved well. I have had an association with Hubbs SeaWorld Research Institute for many years going back well before Rose Canyon Fisheries was contemplated and I am an admirer of its science and commitment to the development of responsible aquaculture here. The Institute has been a leader in US aquaculture research for many years and has done outstanding work in developing the technology to make the Rose Canyon Fisheries project feasible.

My own background in aquaculture goes back to 1965 when I started work with the UK Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. Since then I have seen the aquaculture industry grow and flourish worldwide and have been privileged to work on aquaculture projects in several countries. I have worked in the U.S. since 1984 having come here to establish salmon farming operations in Washington State and a sturgeon farm in California for Stolt Sea Farm. In 1995 I started my own aquaculture consulting business and have worked with numerous corporate and government clients since then.

Regrettably, aquaculture has not developed here as successfully as it has elsewhere in the World despite the fact that the U.S. is one of the world's largest consumers and imports of seafood. Yet we have many suitable areas of coastline, the S. Californian Bight being one of them, and we have been instrumental in developing much

aquaculture technology that is now used elsewhere in the world. It is long past time that more of it was applied here so local communities can benefit from the economic development it brings and so we can become less dependent on imports. Presently, our seafood imports comprise 86% of the seafood eaten by US citizens and lead to a negative trade balance in seafood of $12 billion.

The Rose Canyon Fisheries project has been impeccably researched and is backed by well financed and technically experienced owners. Environmental questions have been thoroughly investigated, this work having had the benefit of years of experience in marine fish farming elsewhere in the world and in the U.S., notably salmon farming in Maine and Washington.

It is hard to think of a better or more timely project than Rose Canyon Fisheries or more qualified organizations to establish this first commercial fish farm in the S. Californian Bight. It will serve as a demonstration of the potential in the region for a substantial new industry and set the standards that others will be required to follow. It will also create many well-paying jobs both at the farm itself and in related businessess in the seafood value chain.

Therefore I hope the project will be able to move through the regulatory process with the minimum of delay so that regulatory agencies and citizens of California will have a chance to witness first hand what an excellent new opportunity this is both for the State and the Nation as a whole. I encourage you to issue a permit for it so that it may begin.

Yours sincerely

John Forster

John Forster Ph.D.

cc Don Kent, Hubbs SeaWorld Research Institute.