SEAFOOD FOR THE FUTURE

December 3, 2015

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

Dear Ms. Sablad,

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

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that food production will have to increase by 70 percent to feed the growing population while adapting to climate change and combating global hunger and poverty. Currently, more than half of the ice-free land has been modified for human use, the majority of which is used for agriculture. Agriculture production accounts for more than 70 percent of all fresh water resource use. Despite this, more than 800 million people are chronically undernourished. The ocean covers more than two-thirds of the Earth's surface, yet capture fisheries and a small marine aquaculture sector produce less than 2 percent of the global food supply. Seafood is a healthy protein source that has great potential to meet the burgeoning need for protein rich foods while minimally impacting the environment.

More than 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported, resulting in an annual seafood trade deficit exceeding $10 billion. In 2012 the U.S. contributed just over 0.5 percent to the global farmed seafood supply, while Asia produced 88 percent. Increasing wealth and rising populations in these countries will likely result in higher consumption of the seafood that they produce, leaving less available for export to major importing countries like the U.S.

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The U.S. has the potential to develop a robust and diverse marine offshore aquaculture industry. In addition to our strong environmental standards, we have the largest EEZ in the world and, according to a recent report by the FAO, the most area suitable for marine aquaculture production in terms of desirable depth, current speed, and access to coastal infrastructure. The application of modern technology in cage design, mooring, feed formulation, and operations to marine aquaculture is relatively new, but successfully practiced in many parts of the world. Proper siting that accounts for current speed, depth, sensitive habitats, and competing uses coupled with best management practices can produce high quality seafood without unacceptable environmental impacts.

The U.S. has the largest agricultural economy in the world. This vital sector employs hundreds of thousands workers and feeds millions of Americans. It's essential that we turn this proficiency toward our ocean resources, to complement our existing land-based food production capability for a sustainable and secure food future.

The Rose Canyon Fisheries project is an important step toward increasing the domestic seafood supply and supporting coastal communities. I fully support this project.

Sincerely,

Kim Thompson
Program Manager
Seafood for the Future