Unified Port of San Diego

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December 16, 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

Ms. Sablad,

The San Diego Unified Port District (District) stands in support of the Rose Canyon Fisheries (RCF) application for permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to operate a commercial aquaculture farm off the coast of San Diego in our nation's Exclusive Economic Zone.

According to recent figures, the population of California has reached approximately 39 million. With an average seafood consumption of 14.6 pound per person in the United States, California alone will need 257,000 metric tons to provide for its per capita consumption. Over 50% of the world's supply of seafood is farmed. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United States Departments of Commerce and Agriculture recognize that our nation's seafood production will need to drastically increase over the next 20 years and that aquaculture must play a major role in meeting that need.

Recent studies published by U.S. researchers as well as by international, non-governmental organizations report that aquaculture, conducted properly, can provide a sustainable way to produce animal protein for human consumption. This is especially true of marine aquaculture, which requires minimal land-based infrastructure, no fresh water, and minimal energy consumption. The RCF project will take the best of what we know today and then evolve as new technologies and protocols are developed, thereby ensuring that it constantly strives to set the highest standards for sustainability.

In San Diego, economic activities on the Port District's tidelands contribute $748 billion to the region and support 57,194 total jobs. Maritime and industrial businesses generate $2.07 billion, in direct economic impact and support 21,148 total jobs. As an economic engine and environmental steward, the District supports the idea of turning the proficiency of the regions experts toward the ocean's resources, to complement the state's existing land-based food production capability. The proposed Rose Canyon Fisheries aquaculture project is poised to do just that.

Our nation is known for innovating technologies and fostering breakthrough industries that raise the standard of living for all U.S. residents. San Diego, where RCF is proposed to be operated, is a center for biotech, medical research, information, and ocean technologies that have contributed significantly to the regional economy and to our quality of life. A study conducted by the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation predicts that RCF will support hundreds of good paying jobs, help our seafood industry sustain the working waterfront, and provide millions in taxes annually. RCF is a good example of an enterprise that serves our needs while respecting the environment we all enjoy.

The Rose Canyon Fisheries project is critical and it has our full support.

Sincerely,

Randa J. Coniglio

Randa J. Coniglio
President/CEO