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Offshore Aquaculture Expert Available: Legislation Proposes To Open Federal Waters To Fish Farming

Dolores Leonard

UNH/NOAA Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology

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MEDIA ADVISORY: Offshore Aquaculture Expert Available

Legislation Proposes To Open Federal Waters To Fish Farming

Contact: [Dolores Leonard](#)
603-862-3685
UNH Atlantic Marine Aquaculture Center

March 12, 2007

DURHAM, N.H. -- Richard Langan, director of the University of New Hampshire's Atlantic Marine Aquaculture Center and adjunct UNH professor of zoology, is available to discuss the science of offshore aquaculture—the farming of fish and shellfish in open ocean waters. He can be reached at (603) 862-0190; rlangan@cisunix.unh.edu

Yesterday (March 12, 2007), U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez proposed revised legislation to allow commercial aquaculture in U.S. federal waters, which extend from three to 200 miles offshore. The legislation's proponents cite a growing consumer demand that cannot be met by wild fisheries production, while critics voice concerns over the potential environmental impacts of an expanded marine aquaculture industry.

"Our research over eight years indicates that aquaculture in exposed ocean conditions can be a clean, sustainable practice," says Langan. "Further R&D will help build and regulate an offshore fish farming industry that relieves pressure on wild fisheries, satisfies consumer demand, and has minimal environmental impact."

Langan adds, "To build an offshore aquaculture industry that satisfies the concerns of all stakeholders will require legislation that contains the proper environmental safeguards and adequate investments in research and development."

The Atlantic Marine Aquaculture Center explores the environmental soundness and technical feasibility of farming finfish and shellfish in the Gulf of Maine. The work combines innovative engineering design, progressive fish husbandry techniques, feed formulation, advanced communications technology, rigorous environmental assessment, and extensive community outreach.

New England fishermen have begun to use the Center's submerged blue mussel culture technology to develop offshore mussel farms that can be operated from an adapted commercial fishing vessel. Center scientists are collaborating with peer researchers, commercial fish farms operating in exposed state waters, land-based hatcheries, and cage manufacturers to advance sustainable approaches to offshore finfish aquaculture.

The Atlantic Marine Aquaculture Center was first established in 1998 as the UNH Open Ocean Aquaculture project, with support from Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In 2006, that project became the Atlantic Marine Aquaculture Center, which reflects similar efforts in the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico to establish regional aquaculture R&D programs that directly serve local communities.

For more information about the center: amac.unh.edu.