MEDIA ADVISORY: UNH Scientist To Testify During U.S. Congressional Offshore Aquaculture Hearing

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What: Dr. Richard Langan, director of the University of New Hampshire Open Ocean Aquaculture Project and expert in the field of offshore aquaculture development, will testify before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee's National Ocean Policy Study Subcomittee during its Offshore Aquaculture Hearing (http://commerce.senate.gov/) scheduled for April 6. Subcommittee Chair U.S. Senator John Sununu (R-NH) (http://sununu.senate.gov/) invited Langan to testify.

The U.S. lags behind other nations in using offshore aquaculture to supplement domestic seafood production. This hearing will examine current proposals to regulate offshore aquaculture operations, discuss research in this field being conducted off the coasts of New England and Hawaii, and explore the potential impact of expanded aquaculture operations on fishermen, seafood processors, and consumers.

The hearing also will include testimony from Bill Hogarth, director of the National Marine Fisheries Service (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/); Randy Cates, president of Cates International, Inc.; Mark Vinsel, executive director of United Fishermen of Alaska; Sebastian Belle, executive director of the Maine Aquaculture Association; and Dr. Rebecca Goldburg, senior scientist at Environmental Defense.

When: Thursday, April 6, 10 a.m.

Where: Room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C.

A live web cast of the hearing will be streamed from the National Ocean Policy Study Subcommittee website: http://commerce.senate.gov/hearings/witnesslist.cfm?id=1810

About UNH's Open Ocean Aquaculture Project: UNH's Open Ocean Aquaculture Project (http://ooa.unh.edu) explores the environmental soundness, technological feasibility, and economic viability of farming finfish and shellfish in exposed ocean environments. Founded in 1998, with support from U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) (http://gregg.senate.gov/), the Project is funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (http://www.noaa.gov).

The interdisciplinary Project combines innovative engineering, progressive fish husbandry, advanced communications technology, rigorous environmental assessment, and community outreach in support of the development of an environmentally sustainable offshore aquaculture industry in New England and nationwide.

Researchers operate a 30-acre field site, six miles off the coast in N.H. State waters. Its principal components are native finfish culture in submersible cages and shellfish culture on submerged longlines, all taking place in 180 feet of water and fully exposed to the extreme, high-energy environment of the Gulf of Maine. A stringent environmental monitoring program has shown no measurable impact from fish and shellfish culture on the surrounding ecosystem.

Since the Project was created, UNH scientists have successfully raised crops of native cod, haddock, and Atlantic halibut in offshore cages for the first time in North America. Submerged blue mussel farming technology and methods developed by Project researchers are now in use by the regional fishing industry. The first commercial harvests from a submerged blue mussel farm are expected in 2006.

About the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005: On June 7, 2005, the Bush Administration submitted to Congress for consideration and action the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005 (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/mediacenter/aquaculture/). The bill would grant the Secretary of Commerce new authority to issue permits for offshore aquaculture in federal ocean waters, also known as the United States Exclusive Economic Zone. It would also provide environmental and other safeguards to protect wild stocks, marine ecosystems, and other resource users. The Act, which does not supersede existing authorities, specifically provides for coordination and consultation with other federal agencies, Fishery Management Councils, and coastal states.

About Richard Langan: Dr. Langan is the director of the University of New Hampshire's Open Ocean Aquaculture Project. He is also serves as co-director of CICEET, the UNH /NOAA Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (http://ciceet.unh.edu). CICEET supports the development of tools for clean water and healthy coastal habitats nationwide.

An adjunct professor in UNH's Department of Zoology (http://zoology.unh.edu/), Langan has held the positions of director and research scientist at UNH's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory (http://marine.unh.edu/jel). Alongside his administrative duties, he conducts research in molluscan shellfish restoration and aquaculture, as well as in estuarine and marine water quality monitoring. Prior to his tenure at UNH, he was a commercial fisherman, proprietor of a retail/wholesale seafood market, and owner of an oyster farm. He received his Ph.D. in Zoology from UNH in 1992.