



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



**Office of the Director
May 29, 2008**

Statement from the Director

Subject: GAO Report on Offshore Aquaculture

I would like to commend the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on its recent report, "Offshore Marine Aquaculture: Multiple Administrative and Environmental Issues Need to Be Addressed in Establishing a U.S. Regulatory Framework". The report highlights the growing interest in offshore aquaculture in the United States as an additional form of domestic seafood production, including its relevance to a safe, sustainable domestic seafood supply, its net environmental benefits, and the potential to create jobs from coastal communities to the American heartland.

The report also underscores the need for a comprehensive regulatory framework for environmentally sustainable marine aquaculture in federal waters – one that is rigid enough to safeguard the marine environment and flexible enough to give businesses license to operate in federal waters, as proposed in the Administration's National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007. The GAO findings on the need for additional research on key issues for industry and the environmental community are consistent with the outcome of the 2007 National Marine Aquaculture Summit and the priorities identified in NOAA's 10-Year Plan for Marine Aquaculture.

I would also note that we have already begun to address the administrative and environmental issues highlighted in the GAO report at NOAA by:

- Establishing an Aquaculture Program in 2004.
- Working with Congress on national offshore aquaculture legislation since 2005.
- Supporting internal and external research – including site evaluations, environmental risk assessments, and mitigation options for offshore aquaculture technologies and species.
- Collaborating with other federal agencies – including a National Aquatic Animal Health Plan and other joint initiatives such as work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to advance development and commercialization of alternatives to fish meal and fish oil in aquaculture feeds.

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