

January 12, 2007

Kelly Taranto
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, Room 9344 (OFA621)
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283

Dear: Ms. Taranto

Over the last two years support provided to Herring Gut Learning Center through NOAA grant NAO5NMF4721128 has been instrumental to the success of this center and its programs. We have served over 3,000 children through our curriculum-based aquaculture programs, our outreach activities with local schools, and our summer programs since our inception in 1999. The number continues to grow year after year, due to the fact that many communities believe it is vital for their students to learn about our ocean and new alternative ways to harvest products from the sea. To ensure the future of our fishing industry, it's imperative that organizations such as the Herring Gut Learning Center provide programs which educate students and adults on the importance of good stewardship.

I wanted to share a few of our successes with you to show how NOAA's contribution in 2005 continues to be used to positively impact the futures of our local school children.

After two years of meetings and proposals, this September our dream of a high school program for Thomaston's Georges Valley High School students became a reality. Eight students, who were unsuccessful passing Biology, attended Herring Gut five hours a week to participate in our new program, "Science for a Sustainable Future". The curriculum covered all required topics by incorporating classroom study with real life application. Each student was responsible for the care and maintenance of a re-circulating tank in the hatchery or aquaponic greenhouse, learning water quality testing, general husbandry and aquaponic techniques. The ongoing care of the tanks was part of their grade, and they were held accountable if they were absent and unable to fulfill this requirement. By January, these students earned the necessary science credit for high school graduation, something they may not have been able to achieve in a traditional classroom.

The Georges Valley class is an exciting addition to our programming and shows great potential for growth. Initial evaluations from

students, parents and teachers were extremely positive. They indicate that students are now enthused about learning science and see their potential for not just passing this course, but also being able to graduate from high school. One junior wrote, "I learned more at Herring Gut Learning Center than in any of my other high school classes." When asked how we might improve the program, six out of eight students wrote, "make it available to all high school students." We have heard this echoed from parents of other GVHS students asking school officials why their child cannot be part of the Herring Gut biology program. We are offering the course this year and hope to incorporate it into a summer school program that could be offered to several local school districts.

In 2006, we also implemented a scallop spat collection with some students from the local high school. Three student lobstermen took part in an experiment to look for scallop spat in the area they fish. In August, they placed scallop bags in the water. Over the winter they maintained the bags and this past week, they retrieved them to analyze their catch. In total, 22 scallop spat and multiple clams were found. The project was a great success and provided the students with a half credit used towards graduation. We anticipate this program to continue into the future.

This past year also brought great success in our oyster growing project. Eight students from the Saint George School spawned 1.8 million spat, which they grew to 3 to 5 mms. Since the quantity that survived was less than anticipated, students placed their oysters on a grow out site, in hopes to increase the oysters size and sell them this summer. The program continues to get stronger each year and in 2007 our hopes are to spawn soft shell clams and oysters at our center.

During the fall of 2006, students from Rockland High School successfully spawned Tilapia in our greenhouse. The added fish provided a larger quantity of fish waste; consequently allowing the students to raise more leafy greens, which they in turn sold to local individuals. Due to the added increase in the demand for their product, students began experimenting with other products they could sell. Cilantro, red basil, cumin, peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, parsley and flowers are just a few of the product ideas they intend to grow in 2007.

To further expand our mission to provide alternative experiences for non-traditional thinkers throughout the state, Herring Gut Learning Center is collaborating with the University of Maine's College of Education to develop a high-quality instructional program for pre-service teachers enrolled in their Masters of Arts in Education program. This initiative will provide a unique educational environment in which pre-service teachers can learn the alternative teaching techniques that have made our programs so successful. We see this as a much needed addition to training a new generation of

teachers, as Maine currently does not offer formal training for pre-service educators wishing to teach in alternative education programs. At our center they will be exposed to unparalleled learning opportunities, providing them with the necessary skills to apply their professional knowledge in alternative classrooms throughout Maine and across the United States.

Our current alternative programs and these exciting new partnerships would not have been possible without NOAA's generous contribution.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information, and on behalf of our staff and students, thank you for your tremendous support.

Sincerely,
Jeffry A. Chase
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Executive Director

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Financial Status Report