



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



**For Immediate Release
Office of the Director
April 24, 2007**

STATEMENT FROM THE DIRECTOR

Subject: House Introduction Marks a Strong Start for the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007

Today, U.S. Representative Nick Rahall, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, and Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo, Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans Subcommittee took a vital step toward giving the United States control of availability and quality of our seafood supply when they jointly introduced by request the Administration's National Offshore Aquaculture Act in the U.S. House of Representatives.

I thank Chairman Rahall and Congresswoman Bordallo for opening the door on Capitol Hill for an informed discussion of the merits and challenges of marine aquaculture, and I look forward to working with the Congress to pass this legislation in the coming months. I am hopeful that the bill will soon see similar action with an introduction in the Senate.

The National Offshore Aquaculture Act will benefit the American people on three levels:

On the **ECONOMIC** level, entrepreneurs will be able to develop new business opportunities by raising seafood in federal marine waters, between three and 200 miles offshore. Coastal communities will benefit from the positive economic ripple effect driven by new industry, opportunities, the creation of jobs, and the influx of new business revenue.

On the **FOOD PRODUCTION** level, Americans will have ready access to additional homegrown seafood, and the United States will be able to increase domestic production to close the \$8 billion trade gap. Growing our own seafood will give us more quality control of fish and shellfish, and it will help us meet growing demand for seafood products in the United States.

On the **ENVIRONMENTAL** level, the United States is poised to become a world leader in innovative, sustainable marine aquaculture. A large percentage of our seafood is farmed overseas, which limits our ability to control and monitor environmental conditions under which it is grown. NOAA is committed to protecting marine ecosystems, including wild fish stocks and water quality, off the United States. This legislation calls for the highest level of environmental stewardship for aquaculture facilities and a robust research program to support all of marine aquaculture.

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