



**Summary of NOAA's Aquaculture Listening Session  
Hotel Captain Cook  
Anchorage, Alaska  
May 21, 2010**

**Chair:** Eric Schwaab, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

**Attendees:** 26

**Public Comments:** 9

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Held on May 21, 2010, the Alaska listening session was the seventh and final public listening session conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on the topic of a new marine aquaculture policy.

At 1:15 p.m., Eric Schwaab, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, opened the meeting and thanked participants for attending and providing their input on a marine aquaculture policy for NOAA. The chairman's opening remarks highlighted NOAA's interest in developing a new policy for marine aquaculture that:

- Addresses all forms of aquaculture (seafood production, enhancement, and restoration).
- Supports development of a robust U.S. marine aquaculture industry that is environmentally and economically sustainable, creates new jobs and business opportunities, and enhances U.S. food security.
- Promotes protection of ocean resources and marine ecosystems.
- Addresses the fisheries management issues and opportunities posed by aquaculture.

He noted that NOAA is currently seeking public input to help shape the scope and objectives of a draft policy. Mr. Schwaab also noted that the current NOAA definition of aquaculture covers all production of finfish, shellfish, and other marine organisms, excluding marine mammals, for:

1. Human consumption and other commercial uses;
2. Wild stock replenishment;
3. Rebuilding populations of threatened or endangered species, and
4. Restoration of marine habitat.

The chairman also outlined the process for developing the policy, including:

- Once the public comment period is over, NOAA will take the input and develop a draft policy that will be released for additional review and public comment.
- Once NOAA has that input, the agency will finalize, adopt, and begin to implement the new policy.

The chairman then directed participants to the meeting hand-out which outlined the rules governing the session and seven questions that were intended to guide discussion at the public listening sessions and the comments submitted in writing.

Those questions are:

1. What opportunities exist for developing sustainable marine aquaculture nationwide? What are the major impediments?
2. What are the most important environmental considerations and how can these be addressed?
3. Which social and economic consequences or outcomes will be the most important in the next 5 years or in the next 20 years?
4. How can NOAA best support essential research and innovation? What should be the goals of NOAA-funded research related to aquaculture?
5. How can NOAA best communicate with the industry and public on aquaculture issues? What are the opportunities for partnerships?
6. What role should NOAA play with respect to aquaculture issues and initiatives at the international level?
7. What other considerations need to be addressed in NOAA's aquaculture policy?

The chairman also outlined additional ways interested stakeholders could share their suggestions with NOAA through the Aquaculture Program website at: <http://aquaculture.noaa.gov>.

Mr. Schwaab then opened the meeting for public comments. Nine people signed up to give remarks. They were called on in random order. Please see the list at the end of this document for the names and affiliations of the attendees including the people who gave comments.

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The following is a condensed version of the public comments given at the listening session as compiled by the NOAA Aquaculture Program staff.

#### **Science, Research and Technology and Innovation**

- Funding and support for additional research and development for marine aquaculture and for existing aquaculture research programs is needed.
- The United States needs to do more research on the life histories of aquaculture species (shellfish and finfish) and on the marine environment in general.
- NOAA should add a shellfish biologist to the Lena Point staff in Juneau as a resource and to help jumpstart the industry.
- Aquaculture research should support salmon stock enhancement (hatcheries).
- NOAA should continue to support king crab restoration research.
- NOAA should support shellfish aquaculture research.
- The United States needs to conduct more research on the effects of ocean acidification on fisheries, including shellfish aquaculture.
- Genetics research is critical; the carefully controlled salmon enhancement in Alaska has served to protect wild stocks.

## **Economic and Social Issues**

- NOAA should give priority to the protection of the oceans, wild fish stocks, and fishing-dependent communities.
- Alaskans do not support finfish farming for a variety of reasons.
- Shellfish farming (mariculture) is important in Alaska.
- Aquaculture will affect the health of wild fish, and fish habitat.
- Aquaculture has the potential to negatively impact coastal communities and people who rely on the ocean for their food, livelihood, transportation, and recreation.
- Aquaculture could have impacts on wild seafood markets.
- The federal government should develop programs to maintain and bolster the economic strength of existing wild capture fisheries.
- The United States has economic advantages over other countries that include well-developed infrastructure, highly skilled labor, and world-leading technology.
- There are significant potential benefits from the development of marine aquaculture in the United States and in Alaska.
- NOAA should support shellfish aquaculture in Alaska, especially since this form of aquaculture is a potential economic boon for rural areas of the state.
- NOAA needs to look at balancing economic opportunities with the ‘transfer of benefits’ caused by aquaculture.
- Aquaculture would fence off the ocean.

## **Environmental Issues**

- The federal government should develop strict standards for enhancement activities using Alaska’s system of non-profit hatcheries and regional aquaculture associations as a model.
- Aquaculture will cause grave harm to the oceans.
- Alaskans are concerned about escapes, parasites, genetic impacts on wild populations, and the input of chemicals into the marine environment due to marine aquaculture.
- The use of antibiotics by aquaculture operations is of concern.
- Current technology has not eliminated the environmental issues associated with marine finfish aquaculture.

## **Aquaculture in Federal Waters**

- Offshore aquaculture poses an environmental threat to the North Pacific ecosystem.
- NOAA should not pursue offshore finfish aquaculture in open net pens.
- There is interest in engaging in discussions with NOAA and a range of other stakeholders to determine if some forms of aquaculture can be conducted in federal waters.
- Congress should establish national standards to guide any federal offshore policy.
- The thrust of NOAA’s aquaculture efforts should be on coastal and nearshore programs not on offshore aquaculture.
- NOAA should conduct a comprehensive study of offshore aquaculture.
- There should be a five-year moratorium on offshore aquaculture while the study is conducted.

- U.S. offshore aquaculture development should comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Regional fishery management councils should have the authority to evaluate the potential risks and benefits of offshore aquaculture in their areas of jurisdiction
- Alaskans support banning commercial production of salmon, halibut, and black cod in federal waters.
- U.S. taxpayers should not subsidize the offshore aquaculture industry.
- Offshore aquaculture will be an expensive industry to regulate and that money may come out of other programs that currently support wild fisheries and stock enhancement for wild fisheries, such as salmon in Alaska.
- Aquaculture in federal waters should not be forced on states that don't want it and states that want it should not be hindered by those that don't want it.

### **Institutional/Regulatory Concerns**

- It is unclear where NOAA is headed either with its marine aquaculture policy or with its plans for federal waters.
- Coastal states should have an integral role in all decisions affecting the waters adjacent to their own.
- Alaskans should recognize that some states have an interest in developing aquaculture programs.
- The United States needs national standards for marine finfish aquaculture.
- The greatest impediment to U.S. marine aquaculture is the lack of a coherent enabling regulatory framework at the state and federal levels.
- The federal government should respect states' rights.

### **Market Development**

- Alaska's non-profit salmon hatchery groups (associations) are a good model for other areas.
- Recognize that an impediment for aquaculture is the negative attitude that exists among some of the U.S. population, some of the press, and some policy makers, based on a variety of myths.
- Shellfish aquaculture for oysters and geoducks could provide much-needed jobs in rural areas.
- Public-private partnerships are needed to help establish and finance a shellfish aquaculture industry in Southeast Alaska.

Following the final comment, Mr. Schwaab thanked participants and NOAA Aquaculture Program staff, encouraged participants to submit comments online, and adjourned the listening session.

Attendees at the NOAA Aquaculture Listening session in Anchorage, Alaska.

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Speaker
Maggie	Bauman	Fishermen's News	
Julia	Beaty	Alaska Marine Conservation Council	
Cora	Campbell	Alaska Governor's Office	x
David	Christie	Alaska Sea Grant	
citizen	citizen		
citizen	citizen		
citizen	citizen		
Paula	Cullenberg	Alaska Sea Grant	
Mark	Fina	North Pacific Fishery Management Council	
Jeff	Hetrick	Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery	x
Dale	Kelley	Alaska Trollers Association	x
Frank	Kelty	City of Unalaska	
Gunnar	Knapp	citizen	x
Kim	Krause	State of Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources	
Jeremy	Kromray		
Stephanie	Madsen	At Sea Processors Association	
Shirley	Marquardt	City of Unalaska	
Heather	McCarty	McCarty & Associates	x
Sam	Rauch	NOAA Fisheries	
Robin	Richardson	Global Food Cooperative	
John	Sund	Oceans Alaska	x
Cheryl	Sutton	Alaska State Legislature, State Sen. Gary Stevens' Office	
Stephen	Taufen	Groundswell Fisheries Movement	x
Arni	Thompson	Alaska Crab Coalition	x
Mark	Vinsel	United Fishermen of Alaska	x
Dave	Whaley	U.S. House Natural Resources Committee	
NOAA Staff			
Kate	Naughten	NOAA Aquaculture Program	
Michael	Rubino	NOAA Aquaculture Program	
Eric	Schwaab	Assistant Administrator for Fisheries	