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March 15, 2017

Alexis Taylor, Director
Oregon Department of Agriculture
635 Capitol Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Subject: Advancing aqua farming in Oregon

Reference: Our meeting of March 02, 2017

Dear Director Taylor,

Following-up on our meeting referred to above, the Oregon Aquaculture Association (OAA), as the State's primary umbrella aqua farming stakeholders' association, would like to work with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to encourage efforts to sustainably use Oregon's unique aquatic resources to produce food, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth among the State's farming communities.

This work has been framed in a new context with the drafting of HB 2498 by Representative D. Smith. The byline of this bill is to transfer from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to ODA the regulatory authority relating to the culture of "finfish in private commercial aquaculture facilities". Moreover, this bill addresses key definitions applying to the State's aqua farming program, takes note of critical concerns regarding environmental impact of aqua farms, requires the Oregon Business Development Department to "establish and administer grant program for economic development projects involving operation of private commercial aquaculture faculties", and raises other matters relating to aqua farming in Oregon.

While we welcome the bill and its focus on aquaculture, we also realize it could benefit from further scrutiny and a fuller analysis of its very consequential subjects. We see this bill as potentially being a very important product which

could help shift Oregon's aqua farming from the doldrums where it currently finds itself.

In this vein, as we have proposed to Representative Smith, we feel the bill should serve as the nucleus for a thorough examination of the Oregon aquaculture program, targeting not only the real human and fiscal implications of transferring regulation from one agency to another, but reviewing the role of the overall program in the State: how regulations can be streamlined, how production can be increased, how more Oregonians can benefit, and how more impact can be felt by the public and private sectors alike.

Accordingly, we propose the relaunching of the ***ad hoc Aquaculture Advisory Group***, active under ODA's auspices from 2013 to 2016. We believe this Group demonstrated success in bringing the wide spectrum of concerned institutions and individuals to the table to discuss practical questions directly affecting the growth of aqua farming in Oregon. We feel the Group's Vision, Mission, and Goals (Annex A) correspond well to the needs at hand. Furthermore, we feel the letter addressed to ODA of June 14, 2015 (Annex B) serves as ample justification for this relaunch and highlights the points of immediate concentration including the need for pre-application conferences and initiating processes to craft a state aqua farming plan, including regulations and monitoring as well as targeted investment.

Understanding that relaunching an *ad hoc* group for such significant activities requires considerable time for organization and record-keeping, we would like to propose that the re-launched Group operate under the co-chairmanship of ODA and OAA and that OAA be responsible for the secretariat tasks. We feel this approach will be the most cost-effective as well as holistic—an approach that could potentially be enshrined in the text when revisiting HB 2498.

We hope our suggestions will be acceptable when identifying pathways to help a struggling aqua farming sub-sector in Oregon. We are always available for further discussion or to offer additional details. Thank you in advance for your support of Oregon aqua farming.

Sincerely,

Clint Bentz, President
Oregon Aquaculture Assn

Cc: Representative David Brock Smith