From:	Diane Windham
To:	opc.comments@scc.ca.gov
Subject:	Comments on OPC Strategic Plan from NOAA Aquaculture Program
Date:	Friday, September 02, 2011 1:31:17 PM
Attachments:	Diane_Windham.vcf

Hello -

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on OPC's Strategic Plan (Plan). The following comments reflect the input from the NOAA Aquaculture Program Office and from the Southwest Regional Aquaculture Coordinator.

First, we would like to complement the OPC on including marine aquaculture in the Plan. It is very appropriate, in as much as the OPC and their contractors are completing the draft PEIR for Marine Aquaculture for the CA Dept of Fish and Game.

We offer these additional comments to improve and clarify activities and issues related to marine aquaculture in California.

- We would recommend that marine aquaculture not be included in the "Industrial Uses" section of the Plan - marine aquaculture is not limited to "farming the sea" - addressing many of the ecosystem services provided by marine aquaculture are essentially lost if the topic is retained in "Industrial Uses". For example, shellfish growing provides filtering and water quality improvements. Shellfish restoration and replenishment projects provide key habitat restoration benefits not realized through the other "industrial uses" identified in this section of the Plan, such as wind and wave energy projects. Perhaps marine aquaculture should be a stand-alone section in the Plan, given the uniqueness of marine aquaculture and the ecosystem services that are possible, in addition to the potential for economic and green job creation benefits.

- There is no mention of the role of marine aquaculture in species-specific restoration/replenishment activities that the State is engaged in, such as the abalone and white sea bass programs. It is important for the OPC Strategic Plan to reflect the marine priorities of the CA Dept of Fish and Game, including marine aquaculture and specifically, these and other similar activities.

- The objective and actions items for marine aquaculture relate only to aquaculture in Federal waters and obtaining Federal research dollars. We would encourage the OPC to also include State-focused objectives and actions, including but not limited to completion of the PEIR for Marine Aquaculture, and also some focus on establishing a State permitting system for finfish aquaculture projects such as demonstration or pilot projects. Given the number of bottom leases authorized by the State for shellfish operations, it would seem appropriate to include objectives and actions relating to shellfish replenishment and restoration.

We look forward to working collaboratively with DFG and the OPC on marine aquaculture, as NOAA's Aquaculture Program moves forward under the National Marine Aquaculture Policy and with implementation of our National Shellfish Initiative and National Technology Transfer Initiative. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact me, Diane Windham, Southwest Regional Aquaculture Coordinator at

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Best Regards,
Diane Windham