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September 8, 2011

John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources  
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Laird,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Ocean Protection Council's draft of its five-year strategic action plan for ocean and coastal protection.

California's marine and coastal resources have tremendous value. As mentioned in the Ocean Protection Council's draft plan, tourism, recreation, fishing, and other industries all contribute to a vibrant California coastal economy that is valued between \$43 billion and \$46 billion annually. These economic drivers, however, vitally depend on healthy oceans and coasts. For this reason, as well as for the ecosystem services and the inherent value of our coasts, it is critical that we continue to take action to address the challenges facing our ocean and coastal resources.

I want to commend the Ocean Protection Council for its significant accomplishments since its inception in 2004. This body has been essential in driving collaborative efforts on ocean governance and drawing attention to issues affecting the California coast. Furthermore, I look forward to the Ocean Protection Council's future successes under your new leadership. From your first day as an elected official to your current role, your strong environmental record and ongoing commitment to the protection of California's natural resources has helped secure and will continue to uphold the state of California's reputation as America's leader on environmental issues.

The Ocean Protection Council's 5 year strategic plan consists of rigorous goals that will help ensure a healthy California coast for present and future generations. That said, there are a few areas of the plan that I would like to address, and thus I offer the following comments:

**ISSUE 2: ECOSYSTEM IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

As the budget climate becomes more dismal both in Washington DC and in California, it is important to demonstrate the link between environmental impacts and economic impacts. Climate change will undoubtedly have consequences on ecosystem services

provided by coastal resources. Quantifying ecosystem services will continue to be a daunting task, but it is becoming increasingly important. From a policy-makers perspective, robust economic information strengthens the argument regarding the value of the environment and environmental programs. Therefore, I encourage you to include a stronger focus on the how the ecosystem impacts of climate change will ultimately be to the detriment of California's coastal economy.

### **ISSUE 3: SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES**

Under Action 3.1.1, the Ocean Protection Council will continue to implement the California Sustainable Seafood Initiative (CSSI). While I applaud the goals and metrics listed in the strategic plan, I am inclined to question the lengthy time frame required for initiation of this program. Given the wealth of information that already exists for many California fisheries, I would hope to see some of these metrics completed ahead of schedule.

Under Action 3.1.3, one of the metrics is the development of guidelines for Community Fishing Associations (CFAs). During the process of developing the guidelines for CFAs, it is necessary to involve and engage the fishing community. The development of these guidelines should be a bottom-up process, and I encourage you to add language that emphasizes the importance of working with the fishing community and incorporating their knowledge and needs into the CFA guidelines.

Under Action 3.1.3, another metric is to increase availability, demand, and sales of locally caught seafood at restaurants and markets throughout the state. One way that this metric might be accomplished is through a growing movement called "Community Supported Seafood/Fisheries." Modeled after Community Supported Agriculture programs, Community Supported Seafood programs allow consumers to purchase weekly shares of fresh seafood directly from local fishermen. This type of program may prove to result in a premium price to the fishermen, steadier demand, and a closer connection between consumers and their local marine environment. I ask that the Ocean Protection Council explore the value of this type of program in achieving this metric.

### **ISSUE 4: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

Under Action 4.3.1, I would like to emphasize the importance of increasing capacity for collaborative fisheries research. Fishermen and women have a tremendous amount of knowledge regarding fish populations that is often taken for granted. By collaborating with the fishing community, scientists and managers have greater access to information that might not be available otherwise. Collaborative research also has the ability to improve the relationship and trust levels between the fishing community and the managers. Ultimately collaborative research has the potential to make fisheries management more effective and efficient. I understand that the Ocean Protection Council has dedicated significant funds to collaborative fisheries research in the past, and I would like to see more robust funding for collaborative research in the future. Collaborative fisheries research should also be incorporated into Issue 5 – Leveraging Investments and Realizing Benefits of the State's Marine Protected Areas.

## **ISSUE 7: MARINE DEBRIS**

Over 14 billion pounds of trash end up in the oceans every year, and often the problem of marine debris seems insurmountable. In addition to impacting over 267 species of marine life, marine debris can have a detrimental impact on California's tourism and fishing economy. Given the value of these industries, we simply cannot afford to overlook this problem. I believe we are just beginning to understand how to tackle the issue of marine debris and continued leadership from the Ocean Protection Council is essential as we work to find solutions. I am pleased to see that marine debris will continue to be a focus for the Ocean Protection Council, and I am aware that you have agreed to support my legislation, H.R. 1171, the Reauthorization of the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act. However, I recommend that stronger, more specific language be incorporated into the strategic plan in terms of the Ocean Protection Council's marine debris activities. Metrics should include precise actions and goals of the Steering Committee. Additionally, under Action 7.2.1, metrics should include not just the costs of marine debris cleanup, but also the costs of the impacts of marine debris. In garnering support for H.R. 1171, I have found that emphasizing the impacts of marine debris in economic terms has been more effective than describing the environmental impacts. However, these types of statistics are extremely limited, and the availability of more thorough studies and statistics on the costs of both marine debris impacts and cleanup efforts would be very powerful for messaging to policy-makers.

## **ISSUE 11: AQUACULTURE**

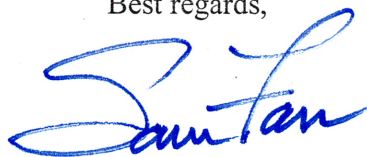
While the Sustainable Oceans Act takes into account best management practices for offshore finfish aquaculture, I am concerned about the implications of this emerging industry. S.B. 201 calls for the minimized use of drugs, chemicals, and antibiotics, as well as the minimized use of fish meal and fish oil, in offshore aquaculture operations. However, the law language is vague and fails to quantify the precise amounts of these drugs and feed components that would be considered unacceptable. Fish escapes also pose a serious concern, as wild fisheries in California waters would be at great risk from any escape incidents. While the law calls for facility design that prevents escapes, current widely used technology has not proved to be fool-proof. For these reasons, I would advise the Ocean Protection Council to proceed with caution in endorsing offshore finfish aquaculture in state or federal waters off of the coast of California.

## **ISSUE 14: BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY WITHIN AGENCIES TO INCORPORATE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION INTO MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

Under Action 14.2.4, the Ocean Protection Council will work with the Ocean Science Trust to develop an outreach and education strategy. I believe that public education is truly the key to success. The public will not work to conserve and protect what they do not understand. Therefore, as we work to conserve California's resources for the future, education of both the youth and adults is central to achieving our overall goal. Education will ultimately lead to more interest and involvement in grassroots efforts which are crucial to bringing about change.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Ocean Protection Council's five-year draft plan. Thank you for your relentless dedication and hard work, and I look forward to our continued collaboration in the effort to protect and preserve California's precious coastal and marine resources.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sam Farr", with a stylized, cursive script.

SAM FARR  
Member of Congress