
From: Jodie Watson [oceanbreeze74@animail.com]
Sent: Friday, February 08, 2008 3:45 PM
To: GulfCouncil
Subject: Gulf Aquaculture Concerns

Dear Gulf Council,

I am very concerned about the development of commercial off-shore fish farming in the Gulf of Mexico. I am joining with the Gulf Restoration Network to express my disappointment that the Gulf Council is now rushing through a plan for ocean fish farming without enough consideration of possible impacts on our marine environment, or those who rely up it. It is the Council's charge to conserve and manage our marine resources for the benefit of the nation. The current plan is all about making money and ease of operation for the new industry, not about protecting our resources.

In particular, I am worried that the Council plan does not:

- * Protect essential habitat and fishing grounds by requiring buffer zones around special or fragile places
- * Require compensation for use of public resources for private profit that will conflict with and possibly prevent other uses
- * Have strict environmental requirements about pollution and harm to habitat and wildlife
- * Specifically protect forage or bait species such as menhaden (pogies) from being depleted by capping current catch levels and halting any big jump due to increased demand for them to be used as feed

These are all extremely important issues that must be adequately addressed before any aquaculture permits are considered in the Gulf of Mexico. Allowing NOAA Fisheries to make regulations piecemeal in the future for environmental standards does not protect our public resources and the people that rely on them. I strongly urge the Council to review your developing plan for ocean fish farming very carefully before moving forward.

Sincerely,

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