

Open ocean aquaculture off the Kohala Coast, (Fishes in big cages in our ocean)

By Diane Kanealii, Letter to the editor submitted to Honolulu Advertiser on July 28, 2009

As lifelong residents of Hawaii we are concerned about what goes on in Hawaii and what is being planned for our community. We happened to attend a community planning meeting in Kawaihae, where Neil Sims, President of Kona Blue Water, LLC did a presentation on Open Ocean Aquaculture (OOA). Kona Blue is an open ocean "fish farm" off of the Kona Coast in the waters of Keahole. They produce "Kampachi" (Kahala that has been branded) and they want to expand their operation. After nine years and over \$4 million dollars in tax credits from the State of Hawaii, \$400,000 from NOAA as well as millions from private investors (Food & water watch: Fishy Farms, Oct. 2007) they have report that they are still not profitable. Kona blue plan to produce 650 tons of Kampachi with 600 lbs. to be sold locally.

In the works are 2 more "fish farms" off the Big Island and another off of Maui. Indigo Seafood and Hawaii Oceanic Technology Incorporated [HOTI] propose to operate off the Kohala coast. The site is located 1/2 mile to 3 miles off shore of Malae Point (about 4-5 miles north of Kawaihae harbor - Kohala side). HOTI propose to produce high grade Yellow fin and Big eye tuna to be EXPORTED to Japan the continental U.S. and other countries.

We researched the topic, reviewed other aquaculture projects and attended several meetings regarding this issue. We met Jim Mcvey of INDIGO SEAFOOD when he came to our community association meeting and presented us with information about OOA, shared his proposal and asked for our support. We also attended a meeting with the Food and Water Watch non-profit Organization, based out of Washington D.C. (with local representation) to get their input and heard their concerns. We went in with an unbiased attitude to gather and review the pros and cons of OOA. Our intent was to gather as much information a possible so we could make informed decisions. The more we learned, the more we feared for our island, community and environment. We then came to the realization that it was IRRELEVANT!! No matter how good the technology is, how much fish they can provide to feed the world, or how many jobs they can provide, our oceans SHOULD NOT BE FOR SALE. Hawaiian lands were stolen and continue to be sold off, leased, etc. under the control of our Federal and State Government. Are we going to allow this to continue with our ocean and resources? The majority of the beachfront properties are owned by large corporations, hotels and private entities. Mauna Kea has been invaded and the invasion continues to grow with the expansion of larger and new telescopes with the promise to protect the sacred sites. Don't they understand that the whole mountain is sacred?

The access to the lands and beaches are limited to what is left after they sell off the prime properties. If the State allows leases of our ocean for fish farms, where does this end? Our access to the Ocean will follow suit and become limited to what is left for public use. One of the proposed sites includes 247 ocean acres and the other proposed site is 10 ocean acres. There are no limitations on how many farms can emerge under the premise of feeding world hunger. There was a time when Hawaiians fed over one million people before they died en masse from diseases brought in from the foreign ships. What was their secret? Why are trying to change the balance of mother nature, rather than utilizing a proven system that was practiced successfully in Hawaii for centuries?

One option is to research and resurrect the past practices to restore the fish ponds and agriculture sites to work toward self sufficiency. The millions of dollars given to the OOA projects by Federal and State tax credits and public grants could be redistributed to support the restorations and expansion of fish ponds and agricultural lands. We may not become financially wealthy but we believe Hawaii can become self sufficient and stop the bleeding of our most precious resources. Looking at the past practices and tapping into the Kupuna wealth of knowledge to guide us toward the future rather than allow our waters to be used as the

testing grounds for those wanting to make money off of our resources. If investors and developers of these OOA projects are wrong about the damage they can do to the ocean environment, they lose their money. We, the people of Hawaii stand to lose our ocean, our source, our way of life. The damaged reefs and unbalanced ecosystems may take years to repair themselves, if ever. Hawaii should not be responsible to feed the world when we can't feed our own people. How much more do the people of Hawaii have to give and for whose benefit?

We say enough is ENOUGH! All those who agree, get involved and STOP the raping of our resources. Attend the meetings, talk to your neighbors, call your representatives and let your voices be heard. KULIA!!

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