

# Kona Blue Water Farms<sup>A</sup> Division of Black Pearls,



May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003  
KBWF/Lily Kong 2

Mrs Lily Kong  
Po'o, Ka Ohana O Na Kupuna O Kona  
78-6797 Mamalahoa Hwy  
Holualoa, HI 96725

Aloha, Mrs Kong,

Thank you for your letter of April 30<sup>th</sup>. We were disappointed that your kupuna group did not endorse our open ocean fish farm proposal. We were even more disappointed that your group was not even interested in meeting to discuss this proposal with us.

Over the last two years, as we have been moving our open ocean fish farm proposal through a series of public meetings, we have found that most people, like your kupuna group, were initially opposed to the idea of open ocean fish farming. However, when we were able to sit down and talk with people, we could directly address their questions or concerns. As people learn more about the open ocean fish farm idea, through open, constructive discussions, we have found they almost always end up eventually accepting or even endorsing the concept. I believe that if you had allowed us to give a presentation to your kupuna group, and to engage your group in such discussions, that we could have found some common areas of agreement. You may still not have endorsed the proposal, but you would have been at least more informed and educated about its pros and cons, and about the alternatives.

Many of the concerns you express in your letter are based on misunderstandings or misperceptions about our proposal, or about fish farming in general. I would therefore like to try to address some of your questions and concerns for you :

1. "the fish will be costly to feed". Actually, the dry pellet feed is relatively inexpensive. It costs around \$0.55c per pound, landed here in Kona. Certainly, with the additional expenses that you list, fish farming is an expensive proposition, and we want to raise high-value fish in order to make the venture viable. However, our fish farm production will in no way result in an increase in fish prices locally. If anything, having more fish locally available will result in a softening of fish prices.
2. "the fish feed on algae (on) coral reefs". The pellet fish feed provides a healthy, balanced diet for the fish. We – and several other companies – are already raising various species of fish using pellet diets, and the response from people who taste these fish is very positive.
3. "fish are not necessarily compatible to live in a small space". One of the beauties of the open ocean net pens is that they allow us to raise fish at much lower densities than in a land-based system.

4. “What will happen to these (Kona) fishermen?” There are a decreasing number of commercial fishermen in Kona. Ever since increased restrictions on bottom-fishing took effect, the number of full-time commercial bottom-fishermen has been decreasing, to where it is now near zero. We have had several bottom-fishermen approach us and ask if there is a possibility for them getting jobs on the fish farm. At the moment, these fishermen have to take other full-time jobs to support their families. So, to answer your question: we hope that some of these Kona fishermen will get a chance to get back to work on the ocean!

5. “This is where the Kona crab, nabeta and weke ‘ula are”. Our draft Environmental Assessment specifically addresses potential conflict with existing fisheries. While these fishery resources do probably occur within our proposed farm area, the currents are so strong in this area that there is no fishing activity there.

6. “The pollution .... (will be) driven to shore .... (and) over time .... will accumulate, smothering and killing the life below” Another of the beauties of open ocean fish farming is that the currents do indeed dissipate any suspended solids or dissolved nutrients in the effluent. The currents in this area run parallel with the shoreline. The winds only affect floating particulates, so the suspended solids in the water column will not be blown onto shore. There will also be an extensive environmental monitoring program that will track water quality around the farm, and corals and fish on the adjacent reef, to ensure that there is no long term detriment.

7. “What makes Kona Blue Water Farms think its cages are safe two miles out?” Our cages are proposed to be only 2,000 feet offshore, not two miles. Fishing buoys usually break loose because they have only one mooring line, and there is no way to replace any worn parts down near the anchor. Our cages will have an entire mooring array, with many different anchors and mooring lines. The array will be engineered to ensure that if one line is worn, or breaks, then the others can safely take the strain until the worn or broken link can be replaced.

8. “The whales will be hurt by the moorings and the web mesh”. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that whales will become entangled, or otherwise be hurt by the moorings or the web mesh on the cages.

9. “the only alternatives are to limit the size and quantity (of fish taken?) from our oceans, or to work with our people to restore the Hawaiian fishponds”. While these alternatives offer some potential, they are not very practical answers to the larger questions of increasing population pressure, and the need for economic diversification. Further reducing the take of fish from our oceans will not solve any of these problems, as it will not increase the available food supply. There are already many fishing regulations; any attempts at further restrictions face a myriad of objections from fishermen. We cannot just continue to take .... we have to learn how to give something back.

And yes, native Hawaiians knew this when they operated the great fishpond systems in the pre-contact period. We like to think of our offshore fish farm proposal as simply a more technologically advanced form of the Hawaiian fishpond.

Again, Mrs Kong, let me please reiterate our willingness to meet with your kupuna group to discuss these and other issues. We still seek such a meeting, not for our company’s ends (as you have already refused to endorse our proposed farm), but for your own group’s education and information purposes.

We believe that groups such as yours could play a crucial role in fostering wider acceptance of new technologies, such as open ocean fish farms. However, it would seem to be difficult for you to offer

informed guidance or educated suggestions for our community when you do not wish to discuss these new ideas with the proponents. We hope you will revisit this decision, and that we can meet at some time in the future.

Aloha, and mahalo,

Neil Anthony Sims  
Vice-President / Research Director