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**Remarks by U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd
at the Dedication of the National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture
August 31, 2001**

Thank you all for being here today for the dedication of the National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture. I am pleased to be here to celebrate. I also want to express my appreciation to those involved with the planning of these festivities for their efforts. Although it has taken many years, and hard work on the part of many people, it is wonderful to finally see the realization of this dream. On this long-awaited day, at the start of a holiday weekend, I am glad that my schedule allows me to be here with you.

The old saying goes: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." That saying, I am told, is an old Chinese proverb, but the sentiment is purely American. In this nation, we believe that anyone, given an opportunity, can achieve the American dream if they are willing to learn and to work hard.

The American public education system is founded on the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to be educated. Furthermore, an educated populace is vital to the well-being of our nation. If we fail to foster opportunities for children to learn, especially if we fail to teach them history, they will not have, nor will our nation have, a bright future. We must be vigilant in looking for such new opportunities to benefit our nation and sustain hope for the future.

These are the ideals that underscore good government -- the kind of government that lays down a strong foundation upon which people can dream, and then build their own futures. The National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture, the facility which we are dedicating today, exemplifies this noble goal of American government. Here before you is a federal investment in many lifetimes of achievement. Here is a government initiative that provides opportunities for those who dare to seek them.

Our new National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture will focus on farming fish in the cool and cold water streams that are so abundant in the Appalachian region. The scientific minds of the people who will earn their living here will try to hone in on a disease-resistant and hardy line of fish that can be raised efficiently and with a minimum impact on the environmental resources that are used in production. With farm prices low

and the rural economy failing in many places, aquaculture offers an alternative, profitable, and quality product. Essentially, this state-of-the-art facility has been built to teach us new ways with fish, and will create new opportunities for enterprising people to help themselves.

Many of you may fondly recall your own favorite fishing hole where the cool waters were a resourceful haven for you to catch dinner for your family. After carefully baiting the hook you would wait, calmly, trying to contain your anticipation. And then, without announcement or fanfare, suddenly you would feel that familiar tug which meant that there would be a fine fresh meal that evening. Of course, there are always memories of the "big one that got away," but your biggest fish story could be saved for another day when your luck was not as good.

Unfortunately, natural havens for healthy fish are becoming increasingly scarce. As Americans become more concerned with a healthy diet, and the quality of meat sources becomes questionable in other parts of the world, people around the globe will want to include more fish in their diets. With natural habitats dying, and fish consumption on the rise, an economic opportunity presents itself. The United States is the world's second largest seafood importer, and a major importer of farm-raised seafood products. The total value of aquaculture products imported into the United States in 1999 is estimated at \$2.4 billion, indicating a strong market for farmed fish. I hope that enterprising, entrepreneurial American fish farmers will work to fill the American demand for fish with a quality American-grown product. We may even be able to reduce the seafood trade deficit – third only to the importation of oil and automobiles. This new Center has been built to improve the prospects of aquaculture.

We have only begun to more fully appreciate the opportunities related to farming fish. Actually, the practice of aquaculture, raising and harvesting fish, historically dates back to 1000 B.C., in China.

But why put a new aquaculture research center in West Virginia?

West Virginia has an abundant supply of water resources, including tens of thousands of springs scattered throughout the state. Recognizing the potential value of West Virginia waters for the farming of fish, I began exploring, in the mid-1980's, aquaculture opportunities for West Virginia by obtaining federal funding for aquaculture studies and demonstration projects. These early initiatives proved fruitful, and, today, West Virginia is home to profitable trout- and char-farming operations, as well as aquaculture training services in high schools and higher education institutions.

Realizing the potential for growth in the aquaculture industry in the Appalachian region, and the economic potential of aquaculture, I added language to the Fiscal Year 1991 Agriculture Appropriations bill which directed the Agricultural Research Service to study the feasibility of establishing a National Fresh Water Aquaculture Center for Appalachia. Subsequently, I included language in appropriations bills directing the Agricultural Research Service to proceed with site analysis and environmental assessments to determine the most suitable location for such an aquaculture research facility. Altogether, I added more than \$15.9 million to appropriations bills for the construction of the National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture in West Virginia. I have also worked hard to add funding to appropriations bills to support the scientific programs at the Center, and to build the capacity here. I believe in the strong potential of this effort. As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee I have included in this year's agriculture appropriations bill an increase in program funding of \$1.2 million. I have also added \$2.2 million for the construction of a brood stock holding facility for this center, which will allow researchers to select from a wide range of possible breeding fish critical to their scientific work. These funds will allow the Center to make reasonable progress toward becoming fully staffed and operational, using the beautiful space that has been built for their purposes.

The funding I worked to provide is an investment in West Virginia, and in future aquaculture operators, who have only begun to realize the potential of the billion-dollar, worldwide fish market. With hard work, the scientists and their partners will teach men how to grow fish, and how to capitalize on this new opportunity for achieving prosperity. The research done at the National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture can add a new line to the old proverb so that in the future it will read: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. Help a man to farm fish and you help to feed the world!"

Let us dedicate the National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture to the future aquaculture operators who will produce a quality, American-made product, who will help to feed the world, and who, with hard work, will pursue the American dream.

I appreciate your recognition of my efforts in support of aquaculture and the new National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture. Thank you for inviting me to participate in your celebration today.

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