**Sample Talking Points/Written Comment Ideas for *Agenda Item 10: Aquaculture leasing in California – public interest determination*:**

*\*Note these talking points are tailored towards an individual perspective and are Tomales Bay-focused, so please modify as appropriate if representing an organization or coming from another part of California.*

* First, state your name, affiliation, and interest in California’s waters (e.g. Tomales Bay)
* We should NOT accept any new leases until the public interest criteria are clarified.
* When considering a new aquaculture lease, we need to be mindful of the many competing interests in determining whether a lease is in the public interest.
* Tide and submerged lands, streams and other waterways are to be held in trust by the State for the benefit of the people of California.
* It’s in the public interest to use science-based criteria to review new leases.

**Public interest criteria that are important to me include -**

1. **Vessel and boat navigation** (including kayakers, sailers, and fishermen)
2. **Recreation and public access (state how you recreate or use the Bay)**
   1. Many people use Tomales Bay for birdwatching. There is incredible value in people learning about local bird populations and spending time in nature.
   2. Wildlife viewing is beneficial for people’s mental health and their connection to place.
   3. Everyone should have fair and equal access to public and recreational spaces. Leases can limit the recreation space area.
   4. At least half of all Californians visit the coast each year; and the vast majority participate in activities like bird watching, tidepooling, beach walking, and swimming.
3. **Marine mammal protection and habitat**
   1. Tomales Bay is a pupping area for harbor seals. The specific seal haul out sites in Tomales Bay include Seal Island, Clam Island and Hog Island. For the seals population health, it’s important that disturbance is minimized.
4. **Avian species protection and habitat**
   1. Many species of waterfowl live and raise their young in Tomales Bay and play an important role in the biodiversity of the region.
      1. Shorebirds are in decline.
5. **Coastal resource protection** 
   1. As our climate changes and sea levels rise, we will need an area for wetlands to migrate upland.
   2. Eelgrass provides essential fish habitat
6. **Long-term health of the bay ecosystem** including cumulative uses and climate change including buffering impacts of ocean acidification and supporting carbon sequestration benefits (e.g. preservation of wetlands)
   1. Research shows that coastal wetlands are crucial for reducing destruction from storm surges, strong winds, and flooding.
7. **Education**
   1. Tomales Bay is a valuable place for students to learn about biodiversity, biology, Marin County, native species and more.
   2. The coastal tourism economy is significant in California.
8. **Impact to existing existing commercial and recreational fisheries**