



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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May 25, 2018

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski and Senator Sullivan,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 35 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and the federal fisheries off Alaska's coast.

UFA continues to be concerned about development of aquaculture activities. That said, if the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is going to continue to permit aquaculture activities, UFA sees the need to establish a robust regulatory and permitting framework to guide aquaculture activities. Legislation is necessary to develop a national framework. We appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on some components we believe are vital and would like to see incorporated into the bill.

UFA PRINCIPLES—MARINE AQUACULTURE ACT OF 2018

The overarching tenet of the bill should be to ensure that any federal aquaculture program recognize a priority for natural fishery resources and prevent adverse impacts to fish habitat, the marine ecosystem and fishery dependent communities; the bill should also respect a state's authority to prohibit or "opt-out" of off-shore aquaculture. The regulatory and permitting system should prevent environmental harm to wild fish stocks, the marine environment, and coastal communities. The program should strengthen demand and markets for U.S.-produced seafood, rather than shift economic activity away from traditional fishing activities.

STATES MUST HAVE AUTHORITY TO OPT OUT OF ANY PART OF AQUACULTURE PROGRAM THROUGH STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTION

The ability to opt out of any part of a federal aquaculture program should be allowed if state law prohibits a form or species of aquaculture. Opt out authority should NOT be linked to participation in the Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP) and should NOT be superseded by the Secretary of Commerce. State law represents the will of the people of that state through a deliberative process. CZMP is subject to change in state administrations.

REGULATORY AND PERMITTING SYSTEM

Federal aquaculture legislation should require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), and the Clean Water Act.

Regional fishery management councils (RFMCs) should be consulted when permits are within their respective regions.

- Each permit should be considered an individual permit and undergo a NEPA analysis and review (EA or EIS), as opposed to allowing multiple permits under a programmatic EIS. *Each site poses its own unique set of potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts, and cumulative effects need to be sufficiently addressed with each additional permit.*
- The environmental review of the permit needs to include an assessment of the impacts to forage fish both in the EEZ and the worldwide waters, as well as an assessment of economic impacts to commercial fishing communities and seafood markets. *The RFMCs are best suited to complete these reviews.*
- Permit duration will be limited to 10– 15 years maximum, with review every five years. *With the rapidly changing marine environment, 25 years is too long a permit duration.*
- Require mandatory, regularly scheduled inspection of all permitted facilities with penalties associated with violations.

CLEAR FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS THAT ARE THE RESULT OF ACCIDENT, NEGLIGENCE, OR NATURAL DISASTER

- Any permit must include a contingency plan that describes the response requirements to accidents that cause harm, or could cause, harm to wild fish stocks, the marine environment, or coastal communities. This would include mitigation of impacts, including restoration of impacted environments and financial compensation to those peoples and communities harmed. The plan should include:
 - a. Response methods and tactics.
 - b. Sufficient funding and bonding in place.
 - c. The governance structure of a response and which agencies would be involved.

WILD FISH STOCKS/ FISHERIES HABITAT

It is essential that a new aquaculture program not directly or indirectly impact the wild-capture seafood industry or compromise existing fisheries research, management, or enforcement programs.

SEAFOOD MARKETS

The bill should include directed funding of a national seafood marketing initiative for both wild and farmed seafood, and an industry tax on sales of future aquaculture products in order to sustain the marketing initiative into the future.

The introduction of off-shore aquaculture has the very real potential to harm existing wild fish markets and the states and coastal communities that rely on those markets, either through competition or market perception. As the rise of salmon farming demonstrated, prices for both wild and farmed salmon initially declined dramatically. Over the next 20 years, however, market demand for salmon (both wild and farmed) grew, which stabilized prices and resulted in much larger salmon

consumption in the end. We should learn from this example and not repeat history. Funds need to be invested in growing demand PRIOR TO increased production to avoid price crashes.

COASTAL COMMUNITIES

National Standard 8 of MSA calls for conservation and management measures to take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities in order to:

- 1) Provide for sustained participation of such communities; and
- 2) To the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities

Thank you for your attention to our overall views on important principles that should be addressed as legislation is developed. We look forward to providing more specific comments on legislation once introduced.



Matt Alward
President



Frances H. Leach
Executive Director

CC: Honorable Roger Wicker
Honorable Don Young

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers • Alaska Independent Tendermen's Association • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Alaska Scallop Association • Alaska Trollers Association • Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association • Armstrong Keta • At-sea Processors Association • Bristol Bay Fishermen's Association • Bristol Bay Reserve • Cape Barnabas, Inc. • Concerned Area "M" Fishermen • Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United • Douglas Island Pink and Chum • Freezer Longline Coalition • Golden King Crab Coalition • Groundfish Forum • Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association • Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association • Kodiak Seiners Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association • Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation • Purse Seine Vessel Owner Association • Seafood Producers Cooperative • Southeast Alaska Herring Conservation Alliance • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance • Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association • Southeast Alaska Seiners • Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association • United Cook Inlet Drift Association • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters • Valdez Fisheries Development Association