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Fishermen and seafood businesses send virtual S-O-S to the federal government as they struggle to stay afloat and provide essential services

Fishing communities rally together to deliver national letter and video message calling for additional federal relief in response to COVID-19

Today, hundreds of independent fishermen along with small and mid-sized seafood businesses across the country and their allies sent a [letter](#) to the Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of Agriculture, and Congress urging for increased federal support for America's fishing communities. Representatives from Alaska, the West Coast, the Gulf, and New England spoke out in an accompanying [video message](#). Their message underscored growing concerns about the impacts of COVID-19 on small and mid-scale seafood producers and called on the Trump Administration and Congress to address the increasingly urgent situation facing fishing communities nationwide.

The letter outlines several key recommendations that would enable fishing communities to weather the COVID-19 crisis and adapt to its abrupt and dramatic impacts on the seafood supply chain. The recommendations include \$1.5 billion in additional emergency funding (with at least half allocated for small and mid-sized fishing operations); debt forgiveness measures; support for young fishermen; investments in shoreside infrastructure; access to testing, protective equipment and medical care; and, eligibility for the USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

A broad and diverse group of 238 allies endorsed the letter, including commercial fishing trade associations, seafood businesses, food & agriculture groups, environmental organizations, social justice advocates and concerned citizens, collectively representing three million Americans.

"We're seeing thousands of independent fishermen suddenly on the brink of losing their homes and boats as a result of COVID-19. We're not asking for a handout. We're asking for a lifeboat to carry us through the economic turmoil so that we can continue to work hard and help feed millions of people, including our own families," said fisherman **Lance Nacio of Anna Marie Shrimp** based in Montegut, Louisiana.

Alaska-based **Sitka Salmon Shares founder, Nicolaas Minc**, said, "We have thousands of customers in the Midwest who depend on our Community Supported Fishery as their primary

source of seafood. It's in our country's best interest to take care of the fishermen and direct-to-consumer businesses that are providing the essential service of supplying nutritious protein to the country - and in our case, delivering it right to their door."

"While our businesses might be small and many of us only harvest one fish at a time, collectively we feed millions of people who live in the United States and generate millions of dollars for local communities, many of which are rural and lack other major sources of revenue," said **Jordyn Kastlunger, fisherman and member of Tuna Harbor Dockside Market**. "Because we are small we can be nimble and quickly adapt our products and distribution to meet consumer demand. However, we are going to need the federal government's support in order to adapt at the scale and speed that's needed to address COVID-19."

"We are seeing more and more consumers looking for direct access to safe, healthy, local seafood. In New York we are responding by launching the largest Community Supported Fishery program the state has ever seen," said **Elise Gilchrist, Director of Communications for Dock to Dish**. "We have a model in place to ensure that Americans continue to have easy access to nutritious seafood during this time of crisis and beyond. We're asking Congress and the American public to help us help you."

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ABOUT THE PARTNERS

SITKA SALMON SHARES

Sitka Salmon Shares is a completely integrated boat-to-doorstep seafood company. We have a lovable group of fishermen-owners who deliver our fish. We have a small processing plant in Sitka, Alaska, where we custom-process our catch with a laser focus on quality and traceability. And we have two Good-Fish Hubs in the Midwest, which allow us to deliver our fishermen's catch directly to your doorstep (or to your local farmers market or restaurant).

DOCK TO DISH

Dock to Dish is an international network of small-scale fishermen, marine biologists and sustainable seafood advocates working in teams from ports and harbors across North and Central America. We are collectively committed to making local, traceable, low-impact wild seafood accessible to organized groups of cooperative members through our unique community and restaurant supported fishery programs.

TUNA HARBOR DOCKSIDE MARKET

Tuna Harbor Dockside Market is a seafood market where chefs and the public delight in purchasing fresh caught seafood directly from their local fishermen. We take pride in sustainable fishing practices, minimal carbon footprints, and local harvesters.

ANNA MARIE SHRIMP

Anna Marie Seafood is a seafood company building a legacy where tradition meets innovation. The result is improved fishing practices, higher freshness standards, and wildlife sustainability.

We believe our efforts will directly help to ensure that Louisiana shrimp will thrive for the next generations of fishermen. Shrimp is not just our industry - it's a way of life.

NORTHWEST ATLANTIC MARINE ALLIANCE (NAMA)

The Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance is a fishermen-led organization building a broad movement toward healthy fisheries and fishing communities. NAMA works across North America to build deep and trusting relationships with community-based fishermen, crew, fishworkers, and allies to create effective policy and market strategies. Learn more at www.namanet.org.

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