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Contact: Claudia Hensley, claudia.hensley@berlinrosen.com

Two Federal Agencies Rush Industrial Aquaculture Development, Threatening Fishing, Communities, and Ecosystems

Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will move to designate federal waters off Southern California and in the Gulf of Mexico as “Aquaculture Opportunity Areas” (AOA). Areas designated as AOAs have been pre-approved for expansion of industrial aquaculture facilities, as dictated in President Trump’s May 2020 [Executive Order](#) on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth.

In response, Friends of the Earth, Recirculating Farms Coalition and Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, members of the [Don’t Cage Our Ocean Coalition](#), issued the following statement:

“The expansion of industrial aquaculture in California and the Gulf of Mexico threatens local fishing communities, ecosystems and coastal economies. NOAA should protect our wildlife, waters and all the people who depend on them for their livelihoods and for recreation, rather than paving the way for development of harmful facilities that can pollute wild ecosystems and destroy our already struggling local economies.”

Separately, the Army Corps of Engineers is also taking new action in response to the Executive Order. The agency will [streamline marine finfish aquaculture permitting](#) by shortcutting the public and agency review process of each permit application and creating a national permit for all similar facilities.

“Preventing the public and agencies from taking an important ‘hard look’ at risks and consequences of every new offshore marine finfish aquaculture facility is a big mistake - and raises legal questions. Globally the industry has been associated with a wide range of problems, and countries like Canada and Denmark are moving away from this form of seafood production. To speed up development of these facilities in the United States without allowing for proper review and discussion will cause widespread damage both ecologically and economically.”

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Don’t Cage Our Ocean Coalition

The Don’t Cage Our Ocean Coalition is a diverse group of national organizations joining together to fight against legislation that would industrialize our oceans and allow the growth of the harmful open ocean aquaculture industry. Learn more at <https://dontcageourocean.org>.

Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance

The Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance is a fishermen-led organization building a broad movement toward healthy fisheries and fishing communities. NAMA works 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.

Recirculating Farms Coalition

The Recirculating Farms Coalition is a collaborative group of farmers, educators, non-profit organizations and many others committed to building local sources of healthy, accessible food. Through research, training and advocacy, RFC works to support the development of eco-efficient farms that grow fresh, local food, in diverse communities, to foster physical, mental and financial wellness. Learn more at www.recirculatingfarms.org.

Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Earth strives for a more healthy and just world. As an outspoken leader in the environmental and progressive communities, FOE engages the public, media and policymakers to build long-term political power. Learn more at www.foe.org.