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Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance Statement on White House Executive Order to Expand Factory Fish Farms and Deregulate the Fishing Industry

While our country faces the crippling effects of a pandemic, the White House has issued an [Executive Order](#) with a dangerous set of measures that would deregulate the fishing industry, expedite the development of offshore factory fish farming, and promote seafood exports. Instead of strengthening our domestic seafood system by protecting fisheries and building the infrastructure that fishing communities need right now, the provisions in the Order would do exactly the opposite – undermine marine ecosystems and increase our reliance on international markets. The Trump Administration is also blatantly ignoring the public health risks of holding animals in captivity in high concentrations, in spite of evidence that such operations are breeding grounds for diseases and that viruses such as COVID-19 have originated from the captivity of animals in close confinement.

This raises the question: who stands to benefit from these measures? The answer is clearly globalized industrial fishing and aquaculture businesses that would rather not be constrained by public health and environmental measures in their unrelenting pursuit of profits. In the fishing world, deregulation is not a new phenomenon. The Catch Share system unraveled more robust fishing regulations in favor of a corporate-friendly quota system that gives big companies the ability to buy control of fisheries to the detriment of ecosystems and independent fishermen that are best poised to adapt to changing markets and environments while putting seafood on everyone's table.

Just this week, hundreds of commercial fishing trade associations, seafood businesses, food & agriculture groups, environmental organizations, social justice advocates and concerned citizens, collectively representing three million Americans, laid out [recommended measures](#) to support rural fishing communities so they can remain economically viable during the COVID-19 crisis while ensuring a healthy seafood supply. Instead of deregulation, the White House should be pursuing [measures](#) recommended by fishermen and women that will sustain our marine ecosystems, rural fishing communities, and seafood system such as:

- Community-based and ecosystem-based fisheries management
- Diversified fleets and equitable access to fishing privileges
- Limiting extractive industries such as mining and drilling that endanger our seafood supply and marine ecosystems
- Transparent decision-making processes and accountable leadership
- Increasing access to regional and local seafood in all communities

Fishermen and seafood business owners pride themselves on their independent spirit, love for their communities and the ocean, and their ability to provide wild-caught seafood to people. The White House can take the important steps outlined above to support their efforts rather than undermining their economic well-being by promoting industrial aquaculture and global trade as it has in the Executive Order.

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