

May 4, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

cc: Steven Mnuchin, Secretary of the Treasury
George E. Perdue III, Secretary of Agriculture
Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader
Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader
Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader
Kevin McCarthy, House Minority Leader
Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman
Patrick Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member
Nita Lowey, House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman
Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member

Dear Secretary Ross,

We write as a collective of fishermen, commercial fishing trade associations, seafood businesses, food and agriculture groups, environmental organizations, social justice advocates and concerned citizens, representing three million people including 30,000 commercial fishermen.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on America's seafood industry, particularly independent fish harvesters and thousands of small and mid-sized seafood businesses including processors, aggregators, distributors, and other shore-based facilities. The seafood industry is a renewable economic engine that generates 1.1 million jobs, contributes over \$100 billion per year to the country's GDP, and also provides Americans with nutritious protein. On behalf of fishing families, businesses, and communities across the nation, we would like to thank the federal government for the \$300 million in disaster assistance that was allocated to the seafood industry in the CARES Act.

While this relief will enable the seafood industry to offset some of the impacts experienced thus far, it will not adequately mitigate the unprecedented losses that have been suffered nor the impacts that we anticipate over the coming months. Therefore, we are requesting additional support from the federal government to maintain our livelihoods and supply essential food from the ocean to the American public. Below is a summary of our recommendations for your consideration.

- **Emergency Funding** - Like the agriculture sector, which has received billions of dollars in disaster relief, the seafood sector plays a vital role in providing food security for the nation and deserves a sizable allocation of dedicated relief funds. Thus, we recommend an additional \$1.5 billion in funding for fishermen and American seafood businesses, designating at least 50% of relief funds for small and medium-scale operations to ensure that disaster assistance is fairly distributed to a diverse range of seafood harvesters and businesses.
- **Payroll Protection & Debt Forgiveness** - The most recent expansion of the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) is a positive step forward; however, many seafood businesses have struggled to get Economic Injury Disaster Loans and funding from the PPP because of administrative hurdles, high demand, competition from larger businesses, and rapid depletion of funds. We recommend prioritizing access to relief funds for captains and crew who fish, particularly young fishermen (whether or not they own fishing permits) and extending PPP benefits as needed for businesses that can demonstrate an inability to pay their workers or 1099 contractors because of COVID-19 emergency measures. It would also be tremendously helpful for the government to forgive or temporarily defer loans that fishermen and seafood businesses are currently unable to repay.
- **Resources for Local Supply Chains** - Fishermen and businesses that typically supply seafood to restaurants, large institutions, and export markets are facing drastic reductions in sales because of coronavirus emergency measures. Many seafood suppliers are pivoting to direct-to-consumer models to address these changes in the seafood marketplace and meet increased local demands. However, to make this shift on a broader scale, fishermen and seafood suppliers need an immediate expansion of community-driven shoreside infrastructure that allows them to bring traceable, quality seafood to consumers. Government investments in infrastructure would both meet immediate needs and strengthen local and regional seafood systems in the long term. We also recommend grant programs for young fishermen to obtain first-time fishing and shellfish permits and funding for a seafood marketing program within NOAA that includes advertising resources and additional support for direct-to-consumer markets.
- **Medical Care and Testing** - With commercial fishing deemed an essential service, the federal government must ensure that fishermen and seafood workers receive access to free COVID-19 testing, personal protective equipment, and free medical care. They are putting their lives at risk by leaving their homes to work during the pandemic, and at a minimum, should not be denied access to testing or be forced to bear the burden of exorbitant medical bills in the event that they require treatment.

- Food Assistance** - America's fishermen not only contribute over \$100 billion annually to the country's GDP, they also provide sustainable food at a time when millions of Americans face food insecurity. Moreover, many indigenous people and communities of color rely on seafood for sustenance and subsistence purposes. As critical food producers, America's fishermen should operate on a level playing field with the agriculture industry and should be eligible to participate in the USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, which has received \$19 billion in funding "to provide critical support to our farmers and ranchers, maintain the integrity of our food supply chain, and ensure every American continues to receive and have access to the food they need." We request assurance that fishermen will be included in this program given that farmers, ranchers, and fishermen each play an equally significant role in harvesting and producing our nation's food.

As fishermen and business owners, we pride ourselves in our independence and grit; however, COVID-19 has had devastating impacts on our industry with a growing number of us on the verge of losing our businesses, homes, and boats. We appreciate the federal government's efforts to keep us afloat during this unprecedented storm and encourage your agency to be a continued champion for America's fishing industry and the millions of Americans who depend on it. Thank you for your timely response to this crisis and for your attention to the unique issues that fishing communities face around the country.

Sincerely,



Anna Marie Seafood, LA



Sitka Salmon Shares, AK



Dock to Dish, NY



Tuna Harbor
Dockside Market, CA



Salmon State, AK



Northwest Atlantic
Marine Alliance



Seafood Producers
Cooperative



Bristol Bay Regional
Seafood Development Assoc.



Texas Shrimp Association



North Carolina
Watermen United



Mississippi Commercial
Fisheries United



Pacific Coast Federation of
Fishermen's Associations



Yankee Fishermen's
Cooperative, NH



Fishadelphia, PA



Alaska Longline
Fishermen's Assoc.



Louisiana Shrimp
Association



Chatham Harvesters
Cooperative, MA



NH Community
Seafood



Kodiak Regional
Aquaculture Association



Abundant
Seafood, SC



Washington Trollers
Association



Commercial Fishermen
of Santa Barbara



Alaska Jig
Association, AK



Nerka Sea-Frozen Salmon



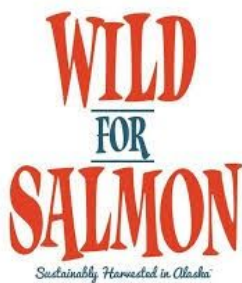
New England
Fishmongers



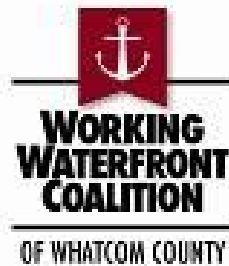
Monterey Bay
Fisheries Trust, CA



Hooked on Fish, IL



Wild for Salmon, PA



Working Waterfront
Coalition of
Whatcom County, WA



Mere Point
Oyster Co, ME



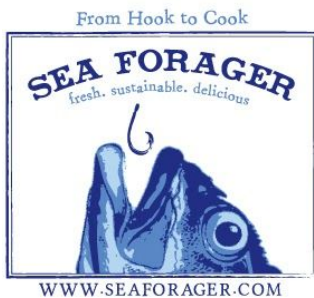
Fish Wise



Copper Valley
Fish Collective, AK

Ecotrust

Ecotrust



Sea Forager, CA



Scully Sea Products, ME



One Fish Foundation



Fishing Communities
Coalition



American Albacore
Fishing Association



Coastal Trollers
Association, WA



Fishin' Frenzy, NC



South Bay Wild, OR



Alaska Marine
Conservation Council



Salmon Sisters, AK



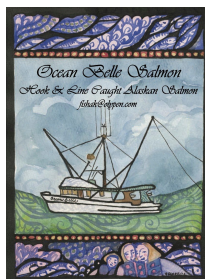
Real Good Fish, CA



Eating with the Ecosystem



Slam'n Salmon, AK



Ocean Belle Salmon, WA



Forever Wild Seafood



Get Hooked Seafood, CA



Ocean Cove Seafood, VA



Heritage Ocean, OR



Sea to Shore Seafood Co, AK



Wooden Island Wild, MA



Yakobi Fisheries, AK

ActionAid USA	American Sustainable Business Council	American Federation of Government Employees Local 3354r
Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, OR	Bellingham SeaFeast, WA	The Breadfruit & Rum Bar, CA
Chatham Fish Weirs Enterprises, MA	Clam Daddys, NJ	Community Alliance for Global Justice
Community Farm Alliance, KY	COS Community Development Corporation, OH	Crescent City Harbor District, CA
Croatan Institute, NC	The Crop Project, LLC	D'Abate Youth Garden, RI
Eat Play Events & Catering, CA	Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, TX	Family Farm Defenders, WI
Farm Women United, PA	Federation of Southern Cooperatives / Land Assistance Fund	Fishermen's Association of Moss Landing, CA
Food for Maine's Future	Friends of the Earth	Green America, DC
Hawai'i SEED, HI	Health Care Without Harm	Hollyhock Run, NC
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, IA	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, MN	International Labor Rights Forum, DC
Kona Pacific, WA	Land Loss Prevention Project, NC	LIFT Economy, CA

Maine Farm to Institution, ME	National Farm to School Network	National Family Farm Coalition
Northeast Organic Farming Association, VT	Office of Connecticut State Senator Marilyn Moore, CT	Olympia Oyster Bar, OR
Oregon Coast Visitors Association, OR	Oregon State University Extension	OtterBee's Market, OR
NeighborWorks Umpqua, OR	New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, MA	North American Climate, Conservation and Environment, NY
Peacework CSA, NY	Pesticide Action Network, MN	Ramsay Construction, MD
Real Food Generation	Real Food Media, MN	Red Bank Hatchery, VA
Roots of Change, CA	Rural Coalition	Rural Development Initiatives, OR
Salmonberry Saloon, OR	San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper, TX	San Diego Food System Alliance, CA
Saraspe Seafoods, CA	Sargasso Travels, NC	Savannah Riverkeeper
Sea Cliff Farmers Market, NY	Shearwater boat rentals/angling unlimited, AK	Slow Food Youth Network
Slow Food USA	Spork Consulting, AK	Sustainable Agriculture of Louisville, KY

Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts, MA	Port Commission Port Orford, OR	Water Alliance, MA
West Coast Adventure, OR	Whale Pen Island, WA	Wild Legacy Seafoods, AK
Wild Rivers Land Trust, OR	The Williams Agency, MA	Worcester Roots, MA
WhyHunger	Ventura Fisherman's Market, CA	

Aaron Yunker F/V Storm Trooper, OR	Amy Grondin Duna Fisheries, LLC Manager/Member, WA	Bill Chaprales F/V Rueby, MA
Brett Montagu, F/V Jo El, OR	Brian Harrison Comm. Fisherman, AK	Charles Peterson Comm. Fisherman, AK
Camilla Pfeiffer Sword Seafood Co., AK	Chris Cameron Gallowsport Seafoods, WA	David Goethel F/V Ellen Diane, NH
Doug Feeney F/V Noah, MA	Elma Burnham Comm. Fisherman, AK	Emma Kramer Straight to the Plate, AK
Eric Allan Hodge Rock Bottom Commercial Fishing, CA	Eric Grundberg Schoolhouse Fish Co, AK	Erica Madison Madison's Salmon Co, AK
Eryn Domeyer Tre-Fin Day Boat Seafood, WA	Greg Johnson Salmon Advisor PPMC, WA	Greg Mayer Frenzy fisheries Limited, NC
Harrison Ibach Humboldt Fishermen's Marketing Association, CA	Jason Jarvis F/V Old Jake, RI	Jeff Favour F/V Apollo, AK

Jeff French Comm. Fisherman, CA	Jeff Pedersen Harvesters Catch, WA	Jeremy Stephen Hicks Hicks Marine and Fisheries, LLC DBA Calypso Sportfishing Charters, NC
Joe Stensgar Airfresh Seafoods, WA	John Alto F/V Spring Persuader d.b.a Heritage Ocean, OR	Jonathan Moore F/V Ocean Belle, WA
Julie Miller Fishing Vessel Owner, AK	Kathleen Murphy Katfish Salmon Co, WA	Kent Martin Comm. Fisherman, WA
Kindra Arnesen Family fisher Business owner, LA	Kris Samuelson Hank & Harry Fisheries Inc., WA	Kristen Penner Blue Siren Shellfish, OR
Lance Gray Punisher, Inc, WA	Leonard R Carpenter Emerald Isle Seafoods, AK Fish Tale Fisheries, AK	Lindsey Bloom R/V Rainy Dawn, OR
Lisa Terry Lady Rosemary, LLC, AK	Lynn W. Steyaart Comm. Fisherman / Direct Marketer, VT	Mark Kopszywa F/V Renegade, MS
Marsh Skeelee Comm. Fisherman, AK	Martin Shelton F/V Kirsten Anna, AK	Mary R Toal TC Tuna Co., WA
Melanie Brown , Comm. Fish Harvester, AK	Mike Breckon Ocean Harvest LLC, WA	Mike Hitchcock Hitchcock Fishing, WA
Mike Pratt F/V Michael Kevin, MA	Nick Chaprales Comm. Fisherman, MA	Nicholas Dowie Comm. Fisherman, AK
Norman C Mostad Comm. Fisherman, WA	Pete Granger Legoe Bay Fisheries, WA	Rex Rhoades Fish Business Owner, WA
Rob West F/V Lucy B, NC	Robert A Sudar Fall Creek Fish Co, WA	Ryan Horwath Comm. Fisherman, AK

Sarah Caldwell Fisheries Specialist, CA	Scott Edgar Reel Alaska Fishing Charters, AK	Scott Lawson F/V Springer, WA
Sean Hayes Comm. fisherman Charter fisherman, Boat carpenter, NC	Shannon Neal Courage Fisheries, MA	Sommers Cole F/V Energizer, AK
Steven Halseth Skogmo Fishing, LLC, MA	Susannah Montague BNS Fisheries, OR	Ted Beese Comm. Fisherman, MA
Theresa Peterson Comm. Fisherman, AK	Thomas Kelly Kelly's Fresh Fish, WA	Tim Mulcahy F/V Calogera, CA
Todd Bishop F/V, Highball, MI	Walter Dean Markee Markee Fisheries, OR	Wheeler Ballance Comm. Fisherman, NC
William Ballance Comm. Fisherman, NC	William Terry Cape Denbigh Fisheries, LLC, AK	
Alice Berlow, VT	Amy Rice Jones, CA	Brynn O'Donnell, CA
Delancey Nelson, NY	Diane VanMatre, AK	Drake Teal Fisheries, WA
Elliott Snow, NY	Fordyce B StJohn, MA	Glenn A. Ruggles, NC
Hannah Harrison, AK	Chef Jayne Reichert, CA	Jennifer Halstead, ME
Jessie Zupcic, CA	Jordan Stover, AK	Josephine Roussell, ME
Linda Brody, MA	Lisa Fernandes, ME	Maria Courtney, MA
Margaret StJohn, MA	Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, CA	Molly Anderson, VT
Rasha Barbar, NY	Rebecca Clawson, MA	Sheila Dykstra, MA
Susan Steiner, MA	Suzanne Phillips, MA	Taylor Witkin, MA
Timothy Rodgers, MA	Tyson Razor, OR	Ydun Donahoe, CA
Yolanda Coentro, MA		

