March 24, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

cc:
Steve T. Mnuchin, Secretary of the Treasury
George E. Perdue III, Secretary of Agriculture
Wilbur R. Ross, Secretary of Commerce

Re: Domestic Seafood Infrastructure

Dear President Trump:

We write as participants in America’s seafood supply chain, a critical component of the country’s domestic food infrastructure and one of the major economic drivers in our country’s coastal communities and states.

Empty restaurants, cafes, and dining halls are a visible reminder of the ongoing, unprecedented public health efforts to blunt the spread of COVID-19. The livelihoods of the chefs, cooks, servers, and other staff are obvious and direct casualties of those government efforts. The economic disruption caused by forced restaurant closures and active encouragement for Americans to “shelter in place,” however, extend far beyond the food service sector.

There is a direct line from those temporarily shuttered businesses to the food distribution chain that supports them; the companies and workers who harvest, farm, prepare, process, package, and distribute the food products that we produce in our country. The Department of Homeland Security rightly recognized in its March 19 memorandum that seafood workers are “essential critical infrastructure workers” that warrant prioritization in government support to help protect and maintain our role in food security.

In the case of seafood, more than two-thirds (68%) of the $102.2 billion that consumers paid for U.S. fishery products in 2017 was spent at food service establishments (as opposed to home consumption). As a result, in many fisheries, the sudden near shutdown of restaurants and other storefronts has caused demand to evaporate overnight, threatening the continued economic viability of the entire supply chain. This could mean the loss of tens of thousands of well-paying jobs. In those fisheries where demand remains intact, the greatest ongoing challenge will be to make sure employers have state and local support for undergoing testing, screening, and potential quarantine protocols needed to ensure a healthy workforce. Without workers, healthy and sustainable fisheries would produce only a fraction of their potential. Congress and the Administration must work with state and local governments in that regard.

As you have heard from other industries, supply chains cannot be turned on and off like a light switch. Once lost, a supply chain and the infrastructure that supports it can be exceptionally difficult and costly to restart. Failure to act boldly now to preserve our country’s domestic seafood infrastructure will impose far greater costs on our economy and cause permanent damage to our nation’s ability to harvest, farm, process, and distribute seafood products.

Though we write specifically on behalf of our country’s seafood infrastructure, we expect that the bold actions we are suggesting would help stave off disaster for food supply industries as a whole. Our domestic food distribution network produces nearly $700 billion in revenue annually, and employs nearly 1.5 million workers. The value of specialty crops annually is about $65 billion, and the value of processed fish products is about $12 billion annually. Food manufacturing tends to have relatively high payments to salaries and benefits compared with other food sector industries, with salaries and benefits accounting for half of the value added in food manufacturing.
Bipartisan efforts to keep Americans safe from COVID-19 and to deliver much-needed assistance to the most vulnerable among us are absolutely appropriate. We applaud efforts of Congress and the Administration to extend unemployment insurance and to address the needs of seniors, children, and other vulnerable Americans. However, with an uncertain timeline ahead of us in this crisis, we must also take additional bold action to preserve the operating liquidity of the food production employers who provide and support domestic food infrastructure and the millions of jobs it supports. Failure to do so risks unprecedented decline in essential economic activity that will severely affect both workers and our nation’s ability to continue feeding itself.

The below measures would help to mitigate the impacts of the public health response to COVID-19 and maintain our critical industry. To be clear, suggested dollars amounts should be considered a starting point to address the still unknown impacts of this evolving crisis:

1. **Ensure USDA’s Section 32 funding levels are maintained (regardless of whether tariff revenues are diminished) and expand to include an additional appropriation of at least $2.0 billion for Section 32 activities that directly support the supply chain of domestically produced seafood to end consumers.** This existing mechanism could keep workers employed, supply chains operating, employers open, and nutritional needs met. The program provides for the government purchase of food for consumers, starting with kids and vulnerable families. For over 80 years, the Section 32 program has provided assistance to food products, the production and distribution of which is generally not supported by larger price support programs.

   We also request that you consider expediting purchases by temporarily suspending federal contracting rules and regulations so as to facilitate immediate assistance to a broader cross section of U.S. businesses, free from bureaucratic red tape that might otherwise delay relief.

2. **Provide an initial $1.5 billion to the Department of Commerce to provide direct relief for fishery disasters caused by Federal, State, and Local government responses to COVID-19.** Sections 312(a) and 315 of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Sections 308(b) and 308(d) Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IFJ) empower the Secretary of Commerce to provide multiple forms of relief to businesses and fishing communities impacted by certain harms—including natural and man-made causes. We request that you work with Congress to appropriate and make funding available as soon as practicable to fishery and seafood businesses uniquely impacted by closure of restaurant and food service industries, and specifically designate the spread and impact of COVID-19 as a natural and man-made cause eligible for fishery disaster assistance. To ensure funding can be distributed quickly, we also request that you waive certain requirements under MSA and IFJ for this funding, so that injured businesses can quickly access needed aid. Please also immediately release all previously appropriated disaster relief funds so as to inject direct liquidity to coastal employers.

3. **Appropriate a minimum of $500 million for the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, to purchase surplus commercial seafood that can be shipped overseas or supplied to domestic organizations.** These organizations could include assisted living communities, hospitals, as well as State and Local government programs, among others. Facilitating direct government purchase of products that have gone unsold due to the government’s unprecedented response to the COVID-19 crisis would both ensure stability in this key sector and provide healthy proteins for Americans.

   Thank you for your attention to these well-intended policy recommendations. We will continue to offer suggestions to promote economic security and stability for America’s food production infrastructure as the current health situation abates. Commercial fishing and seafood interests are highly diverse between regions, so additional assistance may be needed to address near-term critical needs for some parts of the seafood value chain.
Please do not hesitate to contact the signatories below if we can be of additional assistance in our nation’s effort to combat this crisis, while preserving the essential infrastructure that underlies our economy.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Dal Ponte
General Counsel
Pacific Seafood Group

Bob Vanasse
Executive Director
Saving Seafood

Paul Zajicek
Executive Director
National Aquaculture Association

John Connelly
President
National Fisheries Institute

Chris Barrows
President
Pacific Seafood Processors Assoc.

Stephanie Quah
Managing Director
Cargill

Bill DiMento
VP Sustainability & Gov. Affairs
High Liner Foods

Joe Bundrant
CEO
Trident Seafoods

Sean J. O'Scannlain
President & CEO
Fortune International

Randy Rhodes
President
Harvest Select

Roger A. O'Brien
President & CEO
Santa Monica Seafood

Jamie Goen
Executive Director
Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

Matt Roach
Director of Corp. Business Alignment
Icicle Seafoods

W. Ron Allen
Tribal Chairman/CEO
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Kipp Baratoff
CEO
Fishpeople Seafood

Timothy Dunsizer
Vice President – Owner
Fisherman’s Ideal Supply House

Mark Franklin
President & CEO
Golden Alaska Seafoods, LLC

Hood Canal Mariculture
Jonathan P Davis
Owner
Hood Canal Mariculture, Inc.

Inland Seafood
Mary Smith
Director of Sustainability
Inland Seafood

David Kelly
CEO
Innovasea

OC Wild Seafood
Craig Jacobs
Owner
OC Wild Seafood

Sean Ferguson
President
Oceanic Logistics

Bret Scholtes
CEO
Omega Protein

SueAnna Harrison
Owner
Oregon’s Choice Gourmet

Jerod Goodin
President
Pacific Dream Seafoods, Inc.

Tom Trumper
Owner
Pacific Rim Seafood, LLC

Scott A. Johnson
Controller
PanaPesca USA Inc.

Barry D. Collier
President & CEO
Peter Pan Seafoods, Inc.

F. Joseph Bersch III
President of General Partner
Phoenix Processor Limited Partnership
Dave Rudie
Catalina Offshore Products

Kyle Lentz & Shina Wysocki
President & Vice President
Chelsea Farms

Kris Nicholls
Chief Operating Officer
Cooke Aquaculture USA

Kathleen Nisbet Moncy
Vice President
Goose Point Oysters/Nisbet Oyster Co

Brian Koval
Hatchery Manager
Hawaiian Shellfish LLC

Bruce Brenner
President
J J Brenner Oyster Company

Tammy & Doug Devlin
Owners
Lilliwaup Oysters

Donna Lanzetta
CEO
Manna Fish Farms, Inc

Xin Liu
President/Owner
Oregon Oyster Farms, Inc.

Raz Halili
Vice President
Prestige Oysters Inc.

William Taylor
Executive Management
Taylor Shellfish Farms

Daniel Hanson
Owner
HC Snal, LLC

Amy Daugherty
Executive Director
Alaska Trollers Association

Kathy Fosmark
Chair
Alliance of Comm. for Sustainable Fisheries

Marissa Wilson
Interim Executive Director
Alaska Marine Conservation Council
Andria’s Seafood Restaurant & Market  
Michael J Wagner  
Owner

Arcadia Point Seafood  
Vicki & Steve Wilson  
Owners

B.P fishing Inc.  
Burlin Phillips  
Owner

Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, Inc.  
John Pappalardo  
CEO

Capt. Mike's Seafood LLC  
Mike Fitzpatrick  
Owner/Operator

Cascade Aqua Farms  
Brad Mencke  
Manager

Charter Fisherman's Association  
Gary Jarvis  
Mayor - City of Destin, Florida

Colosse Inc.  
Stacy Lutz  
President

Denotta Seafood Co  
Caron Denotta  
Owner

Drayton Harbor Oyster Elston's Clam & Oyster Co.  
Steve Seymour  
Owner

Floribbean Wholesale  
Michael Black  
President

Florida Quality Seafood  
Jesse Flowers  
President

Fernandina Seafood Company  
Jesse Flowers  
President/Owner

Fisherman's Wharf  
Christopher Shepperd  
CEO

Frost Fisheries, LLC  
Dean Frost  
Owner

Grassy Bar Oyster Company, Inc.  
George Trevelyan  
President

Gulf Fresh Inc.  
Joseph Abdo  
President

Harbor Pride Seafood  
Jeremy A. Streig  
Founder

Hurricane Pass Seafood  
Nick Ruland  
Manager/Owner

Kamilche Sea Farms  
Charles Stephens  
Co-Owner

Long Fisheries Inc.  
Tyler Long  
President

Lutz Seafood Inc.  
Stacey Lutz  
President

Main Vain Charters LLC  
Antonio Giambanco  
Owner

Mickey's Wild Chinook  
Carol Takacs Ritter  
Owner

Oceanside Bait Co. Inc.  
James Gardner  
Owner

Ocean Run Seafoods  
Donald Snow  
President
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon’s Local Coast Seafood</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kelly Hanson, Owner</td>
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<td>P.M Fishing inc.</td>
<td>Gideon Mease, Owner</td>
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<td>Wally Pereyra, Owner/Chairman</td>
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<td>Richard Fuka, Richard Fuka, Rhode Island Fishermen’s Alliance</td>
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<td>Renewable Resources Group</td>
<td>Nicole E. Neeman Brady, Managing Principal &amp; COO</td>
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<td>Rocky Bay Seafoods</td>
<td>David Barton, Shellfish Biologist</td>
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<td>Rogue King Seafood</td>
<td>Jeff Werner, Co-Owner of Seafood Market</td>
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<td>Sara Hinton, Farm Manager</td>
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<td>Frank Akers, Owner</td>
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<td>Rebecca Richards &amp; Norm Abell, Managing Principal</td>
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<td>Carl Duwell, Owner</td>
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<td>The Builders Initiative</td>
<td>Peter Bryan, Senior Program Officer</td>
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<td>Guy Lutz, Member</td>
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<td>1. Eric Fosmark</td>
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