



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Fish and Game

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December 21, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Ross,

I write to you today on behalf of Alaska's diverse and sustainable seafood industry, including our emerging marine aquaculture (mariculture) sector, in response to the Executive Order (EO) "Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth" signed by President Trump on May 7, 2020. The EO, in part, directs you to identify aquaculture opportunity areas (AOA) in U.S. waters. With this letter I formally request your consideration of designating AOAs in Alaskan waters.

Alaska law prohibits the farming of finfish. Given this we will not designate areas for finfish farming off Alaska's coastlines. This said, we see significant opportunities for other mariculture activities off our coasts. Alaska has over 30,000 miles of coastline with clean, pristine, nutrient-rich waters, and currently produces over \$2 billion of seafood annually, more seafood through wild harvest than the rest of the U.S. combined. While the mariculture industry in Alaska is currently in its infancy (valued at \$1.5 million in 2019), the potential for increased and sustained economic development from mariculture in coastal communities in Alaska is great and it is poised to experience significant growth in the near future. Since 2017, Alaska has seen over a 400% increase in aquatic farm lease applications to the state and the designation of AOA's in Alaska would provide additional support for this growth by providing invaluable siting information and spatial analysis of waters off Alaska.

Alaska is an ideal place for mariculture and has the largest existing seafood processing infrastructure in the U.S.; Alaska has approximately 9,000 vessels registered for commercial fishing, along with experienced operators, which have the capacity to expand into mariculture operations. Mariculture production cycles fit well and can utilize seasonal low periods for both seafood processors and fishermen and large Alaska seafood processors are showing interest in both farming and processing seaweed and oysters; Alaska has the largest amount of state and federal waters, combined with the least amount of conflicting uses, of all the states; and studies show that mariculture provides ecosystem services such as mitigating ocean acidification in local waters, which could help protect wild stocks of shellfish in Alaska.

The benefits of AOA's would extend far beyond the mariculture industry in Alaska, supporting expansion of a more resilient food supply chain for the U.S. I look forward to seeing the results of this work, advancing President Trumps priorities, in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Lang".

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

Cc: Kip Knudson, Director, Office of the Governor, State of Alaska
John Moller, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, State of Alaska
Sam Rabung, Director, Department of Fish and Game, State of Alaska