



American Fisheries Society

Organized 1870 to Promote the Conservation, Development and Wise Utilization of the Fisheries

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President 2020-2021

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Executive Director

June 28, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As your Administration seeks to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, the American Fisheries Society (AFS) urges you to consider the benefits of a robust marine aquaculture industry in the U.S. in achieving your climate goals. An offshore aquaculture industry in the U.S. can help to reduce our carbon footprint from imported seafood, increase domestic seafood supplies, relieve pressures on wild stocks from increased demand, while increasing the resiliency of our food systems in the face of climate change.

The AFS is the world's oldest and largest fisheries science society. Founded in 1870, the mission of AFS is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals. With five journals, a monthly magazine, in-house book publishing with over 200 titles, and the world's largest fisheries science conferences, AFS is the leading source of fisheries science and management information in North America and around the world. We support and promote the use of best-available science in policy-making.

Today, half of the seafood Americans consume is farm raised and 60-90% is imported, leaving a sizeable carbon footprint as that seafood travels around the world before it ends up our plates. The demand for fish and shellfish is expected to increase by roughly 30 million tons in the next decade, driven by increases in both population and per capita seafood consumption. Yet, capture fisheries landings have not increased appreciably for 30 years and it is unlikely that they can sustainably accommodate increased harvest pressure to meet this demand, particularly in the face of climate change.

Climate change is already altering marine and coastal ecosystems with significant implications for wild capture fisheries and marine economies. Projected increases in ocean temperature are expected to reduce the maximum catch potential in most areas in the U.S. Many harvested stocks will shift from one area to another, or even across international boundaries with implications for

seafood supply, ports, and associated businesses. Loss of habitat from sea level rise will lead to declines in the vast majority of commercially and recreationally harvested marine finfish and shellfish that are dependent on estuaries and coastal systems for some stage of their life cycle. Changing ocean chemistry is rendering some waters too acidic for marine organisms with calcified shells, such as oysters and clams, and threatening the base of the marine food web.

With your leadership and support for U.S. offshore aquaculture, the U.S. can reduce its overreliance on seafood imports and improve seafood security with wholesome, domestically farmed seafood with minimal environmental impact on our marine habitat and resources. Improvements in technology and implementation of best practices has already reduced environmental impacts of aquaculture from reduced use of fish meal and oil in feeds, to strict veterinary oversight of vaccinations and medications, and use of siting tools to minimize user conflicts and effects on water quality. Advances in science and technology fueled by investments in research can further reduce impacts. Well-managed aquaculture, including offshore aquaculture in marine waters, can also mitigate the environmental impacts of land-based animal protein production, such as energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use and biodiversity impacts.

We applaud your commitment to critically important goal of achieving significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in fighting the climate crisis. We ask for your leadership in supporting a clear and predictable legal and regulatory structure for marine aquaculture in the U.S., to allow this industry to achieve the benefits outlined here. Healthy wild fisheries and responsible marine aquaculture can and must coexist if we are to feed ourselves and still fulfill our commitment to wild fish and wild places. Thank for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas J. Austen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas J. Austen, Ph.D.
Executive Director