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December 18, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

Given the processing infrastructure that already exists within coastal Alaska, its nutrient-rich coastal environment, and the potential to balance socio-cultural, economic, and ecological considerations through appropriate siting of invertebrate and seaweed mariculture ventures, Alaska is a region worthy of selection as an Aquaculture Opportunity Area (AOA). Alaska state statute prohibits finfish farming. However, it is timely to explore further, *through a science-driven process*, the various benefits and challenges that would occur via non-fish mariculture development in Alaska.

If identified as an Aquaculture Opportunity Area, Alaska would benefit from the review that would follow through the required National Environmental Policy Act Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement process. Some Alaskan coastal waters have been part of long-term monitoring programs whose data can be brought to bear on these investigations, such as those collected by our institution and others through Gulf Watch Alaska, the long-term monitoring program of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council. Many of those data are made publicly available through the Alaska Ocean Observing System's Ocean Data Explorer.

Local knowledge can be leveraged through institutions such as ours, whose staff have both expertise and data which may be of use in further evaluations of AOAs. There is significant interest, in particular, in development of seaweed and invertebrate mariculture opportunities in Prince William Sound, from which more than a quarter of statewide kelp farm permits have been submitted recently. The Prince William Sound Science Center stands at the ready to assist with the investigations that will follow in Prince William Sound should NOAA choose to select Alaska as an Aquaculture Opportunity Area.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katrina Hoffman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Katrina Hoffman  
President & CEO