

December 21, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Ross,

Alaska has more coastline than all of the other states' coastlines combined. The marine habitat of this coastline is in pristine condition. The nutrient rich water is ideal for mariculture. Alaska is in many ways the future for mariculture development in the United States.

Please consider including the state waters of Alaska as an Aquaculture Opportunity Area (AOA) for the cultivation of oysters and seaweeds. The states long term commitment to the ocean ranching of salmon need not interfere with Alaska being designated as an AOA.

Alaska has an incredibly large and diverse commercial fishing industry, with vessels of all sizes, numerous processing plants and transportation infrastructure.

I have been a commercial fisherman for 35 years and am aspiring kelp farmer in Prince William Sound, Alaska. I understand that NOAA's involvement and support is key to the development of mariculture in Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration,

Thea Thomas
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