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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee

July 1, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to thank you for your leadership in ensuring that seafood trade challenges are a central part of the President's recent Executive Order Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth.

The Seafood Trade Task Force contemplated by that Executive Order is a vital opportunity to close the enormous gulf that exists between the Administration's stated goal of "fair and reciprocal" trade in seafood and the current arrangements that place American seafood producers at a profound disadvantage in the international arena.

At present, foreign seafood producers routinely gain duty-free access to the U.S. market while American seafood exporters are assessed steep tariffs to enter key export markets. This hurts American businesses and fuels our nation's seafood trade deficit. For example:

- Russia has closed its market entirely to almost all U.S. seafood products, under an embargo initiated in 2014. Meanwhile, most Russian seafood continues to enter the United States duty-free.
- Most of our seafood exports to China, the largest and fastest-growing seafood market in the world, face 30% retaliatory tariffs in addition to underlying tariffs that predate the current trade dispute. Meanwhile, we continue to import many Chinese seafood product lines tariff-free.
- Europe and Japan, two other critical export markets for U.S. seafood, both impose significant tariffs on our seafood imports—often in excess of tariffs they assess against third-country competitors. Meanwhile, we continue to import most Japanese and European seafood products tariff-free.

As you work with U.S. Trade Representative Lighthizer to constitute the Seafood Trade Task Force and craft its recommendations, we urge you to work closely with the experts at NOAA Fisheries, who understand our industry and are well positioned to resource key aspects of the Task Force's work. Further, we offer the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee as a forum through which to engage the U.S. seafood industry as part of the Task Force's stakeholder outreach.

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Thank you again for your leadership on seafood trade, and we look forward to working with you to ensure a successful Task Force process.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erika Jelle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

Erika Jelle, Chair