



March 27, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of Washington
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee,

Thank you for your continued leadership during this extremely challenging time for the nation in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand the difficult decisions you are facing daily under constantly changing conditions to prioritize public safety, while also attempting to minimize disruptions to the economy and social wellbeing.

As the nation's recreational fishing industry trade association, the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) represents the businesses that support America's \$125 billion recreational fishing economy. Washington's 944,635 recreational fishermen contribute \$2.4 billion to the state's economy, supporting 15,207 jobs.

In addition to its tremendous economic impacts, recreational fishing is also a strong part of Washington's culture. Particularly during this pandemic, recreational fishing provides an ideal means for individuals and families to get outdoors and boost their physical and mental health in a way that doesn't necessitate close contact with others. Many Governors have encouraged forms of outdoor recreation, such as recreational fishing, as a positive and appropriate activity compatible with social distancing guidelines.

As you continue to direct the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we ask that you consider the following requests:

1. Deem recreational fishing-dependent businesses, such as fishing tackle manufacturers and retailers, as "essential businesses" that are allowed to remain open under proper safety and social distancing guidelines. Recreational fishing provides mental and physical health benefits associated with being outdoors. In addition, recreational fishing provides an important food source for many individuals who harvest what they catch. Therefore, closing businesses that support recreational fishing will not only limit participation in this safe and healthy activity, but will also remove a means of acquiring food.
2. Allow fishing access sites, including boat ramps and parks, to remain open as much as possible. While we understand the need to close certain areas, including those that are readily overcrowded or require active staffing, in general most public lands and waters can remain accessible in accordance with social distancing guidelines. Rather than banning recreational fishing state-wide, we urge you to consider a more strategic approach that identifies high-use areas that may warrant closure, while still allowing the vast majority of state waters that can be accessed under proper social distancing to remain open. We understand the challenge in striking the right balance between public safety and allowing access, and ask that you work with your state parks and fisheries officials to reopen public access in as many areas as possible, as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to these requests. Allowing recreational fishing business and activity to continue is not only important to provide some level of stability and public safety

AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION

1001 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 501, Alexandria, VA 22314 • 703-519-9691 • Fax: 703-519-1872
Web: www.ASAFishing.org • Email: info@ASAFishing.org

during this unprecedented crisis, but also to help ensure a speedier recovery when the crisis is over. The sportfishing industry stands ready to assist you however we can.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss these matters further, please contact Mike Leonard, ASA's Vice President of Government Affairs, at 703-888-7796 or mleonard@asafishing.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenn Hughes". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Glenn Hughes
President