



## **Position Statement on Commercial Aquaculture Approved May 24, 2018**

Commercial aquaculture is receiving increasing attention and interest in the realm of public policy. Continued advances in commercial aquaculture techniques, as well as the Trump Administration's commitment to ending the seafood deficit, have heightened interest in increasing aquaculture production in U.S. waters.

While the U.S. has long been a world leader in the area of freshwater fish hatcheries, it lags behind other countries in the area of both saltwater fish hatcheries and commercial aquaculture. Aquaculture from foreign countries supplies a growing amount of seafood for U.S. consumers. Although the U.S. is not a major aquaculture producer, ranking 16th worldwide for fish and shellfish production from aquaculture, it is estimated that over half of the seafood that the U.S. imports and consumes comes from aquaculture.<sup>i</sup> Developing a stronger U.S. aquaculture industry would not only produce more U.S. jobs, but would also help to provide the additional food source that U.S. consumers are increasingly demanding without putting additional pressure on wild stocks that are so important to recreational anglers.

Domestic commercial harvest of wild stocks has stabilized as most U.S. stocks have rebuilt and are operating at or near maximum sustainable yield. Yet overall demand for seafood will increase as the human population continues to grow. Therefore, the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) supports continued development of comprehensive legislation and technological innovation that could provide the appropriate legal and regulatory protections for the permitting of commercial aquaculture facilities. However, we recognize that past problems with some aquaculture operations have highlighted the risks if sufficient safeguards are not in place. Commercial aquaculture efforts must prevent potential negative environmental impacts, including effluent discharge, forage base depletion, and introduction of non-native species.

ASA believes the U.S. must catch up with the rest of the world and supports increased focus on commercial aquaculture – in both fresh and saltwater – with nationwide regulations for the development of aquaculture operations that includes robust safeguards to avoid:

- Species not native to the area under consideration for aquaculture activities;
- Genetically modified species that pose a high risk to native/naturalized stocks;
- Discharges from the aquaculture operation to receiving waters that have an adverse impact upon those waters;
- Reliance on wild-caught marine forage as aquaculture feed;
- Negative impacts to navigation, scenic resources, essential fish habitats, and all existing uses; and
- Prohibitions on recreational fishing in public waters adjacent to any private aquaculture installation beyond what is reasonable for safety.

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<sup>i</sup> National Marine Fisheries Service (2017) Fisheries of the United States, 2016. U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA Current Fishery Statistics No. 2016. Available at: <https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/commercial-fisheries/fus/fus16/index>