



AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION

May 5, 2025

The Honorable Scott Bessent
The Secretary of the Treasury
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
The Secretary of Commerce
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Bessent, Secretary Lutnick, and Ambassador Greer,

I am writing on behalf of the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) and the thousands of businesses that make up America's sportfishing industry, which contributes \$230 billion to the nation's economy and supports 1.1 million jobs. While we understand and appreciate the Administration's broad efforts to address global trade imbalances and strengthen U.S. competitiveness, we are increasingly concerned that ongoing trade uncertainty is undermining our industry's ability to plan, invest, and thrive. Without clarity and timely action on tariff relief, many of our members, particularly small businesses that make up a substantial portion of our industry, are at risk of serious financial harm in addition to the losses they have already experienced. For many this is an existential crisis.

The sportfishing industry is already heavily taxed. Our manufacturers and importers pay a 10% federal excise tax on most fishing equipment — a tax we proudly support because it directly funds fisheries conservation and public access through the Sport Fish Restoration Fund. However, this tax burden combined with sustained high tariffs and the unpredictable trade environment we face today has put many businesses at the breaking point.

Sportfishing equipment is a globally sourced supply chain, with components and finished products coming from dozens of countries. But the simple reality is that a significant share of imports — and in some categories, nearly the entire market — come from China. For example, there are relatively few domestic manufacturers of rods and reels. The majority of anglers rely on imported rods and reels that sell at a lower price point. Our members are actively exploring options to shift production to other countries or bring it closer to home, but that is not a short-term or simple fix.

Many of the countries being considered as alternatives simply do not have the necessary manufacturing infrastructure or skilled workforce to produce sportfishing

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equipment at the volume and quality required. Building out those capabilities, or creating them domestically, is an expensive, years-long process. Onshoring production to the U.S. is not viable in most cases — not due to lack of will, but due to a lack of available expertise, tooling, and cost competitiveness. And even for companies willing to invest in these transitions, the ever-changing nature of tariffs and trade rules makes it incredibly difficult to commit with confidence.

Compounding this challenge, many companies are unable to secure the financing necessary to pursue onshoring investments. Reasonable lending rates are scarce, and financial institutions are hesitant to back manufacturing projects that carry this level of uncertainty — particularly those tied to volatile trade relationships with China.

The stakes are high. If the current situation persists, many U.S. sportfishing businesses will be forced to reduce operations or close their doors entirely. This would not only cost American jobs but also reduce the availability and affordability of fishing equipment for millions of anglers. That, in turn, would mean fewer people fishing — undermining conservation funding, harming local economies that depend on outdoor recreation, and diminishing the social, mental, and physical benefits that fishing brings to individuals and communities across the country.

We urge the Administration to move swiftly to provide greater certainty and relief for the businesses we represent. Specifically, we encourage you to conclude trade agreements as soon as possible to offer companies the predictability they need. We also urge you to consider tariff exclusions for categories of sportfishing equipment for which there are no practical alternatives to Chinese sourcing. And finally, we would support the development of targeted programs to help companies transition their supply chains through nearshoring or onshoring, where feasible.

We are committed to being a constructive partner in these discussions and stand ready to work with you toward solutions that preserve American businesses, protect U.S. jobs, and support conservation and recreation. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glenn Hughes, President & CEO
American Sportfishing Association