

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Vladimir Putin and Russia continue to prove themselves to be unreasonable aggressors, and we urge you to strengthen U.S. sanctions targeting the Russian seafood sector.

The seafood industry is a major driver of Russia's economy and has become a critical source of revenue for the Kremlin since the invasion began. In 2023 alone, Russian fisheries have been monetized for the benefit of the Russian regime through: (1) new fishing quota auctions, which were expected to raise nearly \$4 billion this year; (2) a new seafood export duty of up to 7 percent imposed by the Kremlin on October 1; and (3) increased fishing intensity, which is projected to push total Russian fishery landings this year to their highest levels since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Executive Order 14068, signed on March 11, 2022, banned seafood imports of Russian origin from entering the U.S. market along with certain other imports. That was an important and much-needed policy action to target revenue-generating sectors of the Russian economy. Unfortunately, as currently implemented, the U.S. prohibition on Russian seafood imports has not been as effective as it could be. This is because most Russian seafood is sent abroad for processing, a step that has been interpreted as conferring product origin on the processing country. In many instances, the third country where Russian seafood processing occurs is China. Through October of this year, Russian seafood exports to China are up more than 30 percent compared to last year, and they have more than doubled since 2021. Vast quantities of this Russian harvested / Chinese processed seafood enter the U.S. market as a "product of China," in defiance of U.S. sanctions and at a 0 percent tariff rate.

We ask that you act with urgency to close this loophole. New executive action to ensure U.S. sanctions apply to all Russian-harvested seafood—regardless of its movement through third countries—is an important step to drain Putin's war chest and bring an end to this disastrous war. Excluding all Russian-harvested seafood from the U.S. market would impose immediate consequences on the Russian economy. We hope that it may also form the basis for future coordinated G7 action, which could deprive the Russian seafood sector of access to all its most critical global markets.

We are encouraged that the European Union is now taking meaningful steps against the Russian seafood sector. On November 27, the European Council announced finalization of a new regulation that will exclude all Russian-harvested seafood from its duty-free "Autonomous Tariff

Quota” system.¹ This new regulation, effective January 1, 2024, will result in significant new EU tariffs on many Russian-harvested seafood products, even if those products are re-processed in China or another third country. We strongly encourage you to ensure that all Russian-harvested seafood is included in the scope of economic measures implemented against the Russian seafood sector or we fear the EU excluded seafood may be redirected to U.S. markets.

Effective U.S. sanctions against Russian seafood would also advance other policy goals. First, they would provide greater fairness to domestic seafood producers. For years, Russia and China have locked U.S. seafood products out of their markets. Russia has banned U.S. seafood from entering its market since 2014, while China has imposed retaliatory tariffs of 30 percent on U.S. seafood products since 2018. We simply cannot allow Russian-harvested / Chinese-processed seafood to continue to enter the U.S. market duty-free under these circumstances. Domestic seafood producers deserve greater fairness in international seafood trade, and action to extend sanctions against Russian seafood would be a meaningful step in that direction. Second, implementation of more comprehensive sanctions against Russian-harvested seafood products is an opportunity to strengthen U.S. import controls relating to seafood products in ways that can improve seafood supply chain transparency and meaningfully contribute to countering illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Thank you for considering our perspectives on this critical issue. Strengthened U.S. sanctions against the Russian seafood industry would impose meaningful additional economic consequences on Russia and are urgently needed, and we look forward to working with your administration to achieve these objectives.

Sincerely,



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Garret Graves
Member of Congress

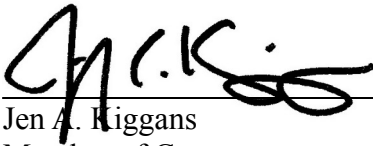


Mary Sattler Peltola
Member of Congress



Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress

¹ Council of the EU. (2023, November 27). *Import of fishery products: Council adopts autonomous EU tariff quotas for 2024 to 2026* [Press release]. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/11/27/import-of-fishery-products-council-adopts-autonomous-eu-tariff-quotas-for-2024-to-2026/>



Jen A. Kiggans
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Anna Paulina Luna
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



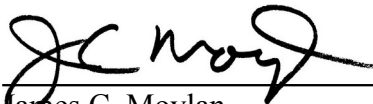
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



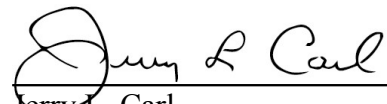
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



James C. Moylan
Member of Congress



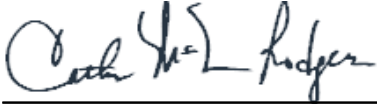
Jerry L. Carl
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



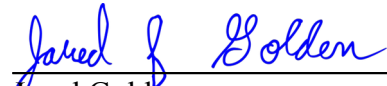
Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



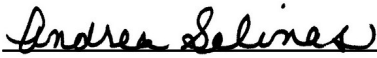
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Jared Golden
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



David Rouzer
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber, Sr.
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



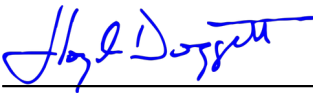
Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



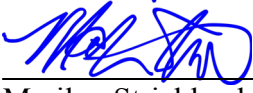
Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



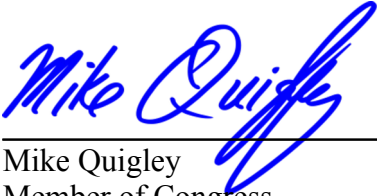
Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



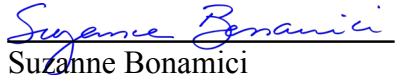
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

- cc:
- The Honorable Janet Yellen, Secretary of Treasury
 - The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce
 - The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security
 - The Honorable Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State
 - The Honorable Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
 - The Honorable Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative
 - The Honorable Troy A. Miller, Acting Customs and Border Protection Administrator
 - The Honorable Richard W. Spinrad, NOAA Administrator