



Jared Golden
Congress of the United States
2nd District of Maine

October 5, 2022

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

When your predecessor came to meet with our lobster industry in August 2020, you [tweeted](#), “President Trump can try and shift blame all he wants, but the fact is Maine’s hardworking lobstermen and women are hurting under his watch. They deserve better. And as President, I will work to protect the livelihood and safety of the fishing community.” Now, more than two years later, hundreds of lobstermen and their families will gather in Portland, Maine tonight to hear from your administration about their plans to implement new regulations pertaining to the North Atlantic right whale that are poised to decimate an industry that has supported and sustained communities across our state for over a century. That is why I am writing to you today to ask that you uphold the promise you made to our lobster community and to use the power of the presidency to save this industry from extinction.

Over the past four years and under two administrations, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has pursued a regulatory agenda, with the support of environmental organizations who have weaponized our judicial system, that seeks to reduce Maine’s alleged risk to right whales by 90 percent. If implemented, this level of reduction in just two years would be a death knell for our nation’s lobster industry. It would close off thousands of miles of prime fishing areas and require lobstermen and women to make significant changes to how they harvest the resource, including the use of “ropeless” fishing gear when it is not technologically or economically viable. Given the magnitude of the changes your administration is pursuing and the impacts they will have on communities along the entire Maine coast, it is unacceptable that NOAA is holding only one in-person meeting in Maine – in Portland – hours away from some of our state’s largest lobster ports, forcing lobstermen to spend time off the water, which is their primary if not only source of income. Your administration’s decision to knowingly limit opportunities to directly engage with the lobstermen speaks volumes about your concern for their future and that any concerns and feedback raised by the industry will fall on deaf ears.

Maine's congressional delegation has repeatedly raised our concerns about these regulations and have requested to meet with you directly to discuss the plight of our lobster industry. It is unfortunate that to date, you have refused to accept our invitation. Given what we know — and what the data clearly demonstrates — about the low risk of Maine’s lobster fishery relative to other activities in right whale

habitat, I cannot comprehend how you can stand idly by and not oppose in the strongest terms a proposal that has the potential to destroy thousands of livelihoods, hundreds of coastal communities, and the economic backbone of our state and the New England region. Your complicity thus far is a slap in the face to thousands of working people who are confronting the uncertainty of whether or not they can continue to provide for their families, that their communities will survive, and that their children will be able to continue Maine's long-standing lobstering heritage.

It bears repeating that Maine's lobster industry is an economic engine for the state, generating approximately \$1.4 billion annually and supporting the livelihoods of 4,500 lobstermen and thousands of Mainers employed through lobster dealers and seafood processors, vessel and trap manufacturers, restaurants, and other coastal businesses. In 2021, Maine led the nation in lobster landings, hauling in more than 108 million pounds of lobster valued at \$725 million. As you know, lobster is regularly the highest-value species harvested in the United States — a direct result of strict adherence to conservation measures that sustain the resource. The men and women who work in our lobster industry play a significant role in Maine's economy, and they have spearheaded sustainability measures for more than 150 years, ensuring the health of the lobster stock and the marine environment.

Time and again, Maine's lobstermen have expended their time and money to ensure that the lobster fishery remains sustainable while mitigating their risk to whales and other marine species. These efforts have proved successful, as there has **never** been a serious injury or death of a North Atlantic right whale attributed to the Maine lobster fishery and not a single known right whale entanglement with Maine lobster gear in nearly two decades. However, according to data collected by NOAA, of the 33 known right whale mortalities between 2017 and 2020, 24 of those whales were confirmed to be attributed to entanglement in Canadian fishing gear and vessel strikes in Canadian waters. This trend further substantiates what fishermen, lobstermen, and scientists have observed for years now, that right whales increasingly migrate further north in search of food in colder waters through areas that overlap with Canadian shipping lanes as well as Canadian lobster and snow crab fisheries that are not subject to equivalent whale protection measures.

You cannot espouse being a president for working people while simultaneously overseeing the destruction of an entire blue-collar fishery and its community's heritage and way of life. I implore you to recognize and oppose these proposed right whale conservation measures and to meet with Maine's congressional delegation as well as leaders of the lobster community to find common sense solutions to ensure that Maine's lobster and fishing industries and the right whales will survive for generations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jared Golden
Member of Congress