



August 3, 2017

Honorable Paul Mitchell
U.S. House of Representatives
211 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Mitchell :

On behalf of the thousands of tourists who come to Michigan to hunt, fish, enjoy shooting sports, and other outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy our trail systems (both land and water trails), we, the Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan (TICOM), write to express our concerns over the growing threat of commercial aquaculture in the Great Lakes.

Specifically, we urge you to co-sponsor H.R. 961. This bill, authored by Congressman Dan Kildee (MI), will maintain our pristine coastal shorelines and protect our fish and wildlife, and our outdoor heritage from the threats of commercial fish farming in the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes provide world class recreational boating, hunting and fishing opportunities. Moreover, they provide drinking water to more than 35 million people. As the largest freshwater ecosystem on earth, the Great Lakes are home to numerous fish and wildlife species, from coaster brook trout and Chinook salmon to blue herons and wood ducks. This abundance of wildlife drives a significant and crucial part of the Basin's outdoor economy which supports over \$1.5 billion in traveler spending here in Michigan and regionally supports a \$7 billion fishery and our \$16 billion tourism industry annually. Commercial aquaculture could put local economies at risk, potentially undermine the billions of federal restoration investments into the Great Lakes, pose disease risk to native fish populations, and therefore should be prohibited in our Great Lakes.

PO Box 403, Stanwood, MI 49346

Phone: 231-823-0015

www.mitourismcoalition.org

mitourismcoalition@gmail.com

H.R. 961 would prohibit commercial aquaculture facilities within the Great Lakes. This prohibition would ensure that native fish populations are protected from the numerous environmental concerns associated with these facilities, some of which include: domestic fish escapement and inter-breeding with wild fish, incubation of harmful diseases like ISA (infectious salmon anemia), fish waste build-up on the lake floor, and the potential introduction of antibiotics, herbicides, and hormones to an already stressed Great Lakes ecosystem.

H.R. 961 provides stronger protections for our drinking water, the Great Lakes and the fish and wildlife that call them home. We must ensure that our nation's most vulnerable water resources are protected for today and future generations. Thank you for embracing Great Lakes tourism as well as hunting, fishing and our nation's outdoor heritage. Again, we urge your support for this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Furbush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal tail stroke extending to the right.

Jamie Furbush, TICOM President