



**FISHING COMMUNITIES COALITION**

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**National Young Fishermen's Development Program  
Gains Congressional Support**

**Washington, DC:** The Fishing Communities Coalition (FCC) announced last week that their proposed National Young Fishermen's Development Program gained support from Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle during recent meetings in Washington, D.C. Over the past several months, dozens of FCC commercial fishermen members have met with more than 30 congressional offices to promote this sorely needed program.

"We are all thrilled that this proposal has received such a warm welcome on Capitol Hill," said Linda Behnken, Executive Director of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association. "We've brought a number of young Alaskan fishermen to Washington to demonstrate the real need for this program and the difficulties facing our industry in recruiting qualified young fishermen."

Currently, there is not a single federal program dedicated to training, educating and assisting the next generation of commercial fishermen and the need could not be greater. Without a new generation of fishermen, consumer access to domestically-caught seafood will disappear along with fishing jobs and portside infrastructure.

Numerous challenges, like the high cost of entry, financial risks and the lack of entry-level opportunities have significantly reduced the opportunities for young people to start a career in commercial fishing. The Young Fishermen's Development Program would help expand upon current, but very limited, regional efforts underway and initiate a federal program to support our nation's beginning commercial fishermen and ensure a continuous supply of safe, healthy American seafood to market.

The program is modeled after the USDA's successful Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which Congress enacted several years ago to ensure the future of that industry. That program is credited with preparing hundreds of young farmers and ranchers for industry careers.

"The average age of those engaged in the commercial fishing industry, like the farming industry a number of years ago, continues to increase," said John Pappalardo, CEO of the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance. "We must act now to ensure that the next generation of commercial fishermen are well prepared to sustainably harvest America's seafood and support our coastal communities."

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Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance • Half Moon Bay Groundfish Marketing Association • Maine Coast Fishermen's Association



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In addition to congressional support, the FCC intends to meet with representatives from the Trump Administration and seek their support for this exciting program aimed at preserving fishing communities, creating jobs for young fishermen and ensuring a sustainable supply of American-caught seafood to market.

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*[The Fishing Communities Coalition](#) is the united voice for small-boat, community-focused, commercial fishermen from around the country who strive to bring their stewardship vision to bear on national issues. We believe that together, fishermen from around the United States who believe in community-focused ideals, science-based management and forward-looking policies can build a national movement that protects fish, fishermen and fishing communities for this and future generations.*

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