

STAFF SUMMARY OF CARES ACT AND OTHER EFFORTS TO ASSIST FISHING BUSINESSES

On March 27, the House passed a \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief package, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) (HR 748).

The package is the largest economic stimulus package in U.S. history. It includes \$500 billion in funding for various U.S. industries, including \$300 million earmarked for fisheries and aquaculture. A coalition of fishing industry representatives from around the nation [submitted a letter](#) (Supplemental Informational Report 3) to President Trump asking for assistance with the severe economic hardship created by the coronavirus epidemic. With consumers “sheltering in place” and restaurants closed, the \$100 billion-per-year demand for U.S. fishery products has evaporated overnight, according to the coalition, putting tens of thousands of well-paid jobs at risk. The coalition called for about \$4 billion in Federal assistance to maintain the fishery supply chain until the economy recovers.

Section 12005 of the CARES Act focuses on fisheries and stipulates that funds are authorized to aid tribal, subsistence, commercial, and charter fishery participants affected by the novel coronavirus. This section of the bill is aimed at supporting independent operators who are not otherwise covered by agriculture disaster assistance programs. To be eligible for relief, participants must have “revenue losses greater than 35 percent as compared to the prior five-year average revenue, or any negative impacts to subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial fisheries.”

Funds may be awarded on a rolling basis “and within a fishing season to ensure rapid delivery of funds,” which will remain available until Sept. 30, 2021. The agency that will oversee the funds has not yet been determined.

In addition to Section 12005, the bill provides \$4 billion to cargo carriers, which help the seafood industry in moving product; \$1,200 in relief for Americans with an income below \$75,000 per year; adds \$600/week to unemployment benefits for four months; gives \$100 billion to hospitals and health providers and increases Medicare reimbursements for treating coronavirus; gives \$750 million to food banks, to Puerto Rico and the other territories for food assistance, and to programs for food distribution on American Indian reservations; makes \$500 billion of loans or investments to businesses, states and municipalities, and \$32 billion in grants to the airline industry; provides mortgage relief; and delays student loan payments. A detailed analysis is available on the [Saving Seafood website](#).

Section 12005 is provided in its entirety at the end of this report.

Useful links for small businesses

Most states have set up web pages to assist small businesses in navigating the CARES Act and other available aid:

- Washington COVID-19 websites:
 - [General COVID-19 information page](#)
 - [Washington resource list for businesses and workers](#)

- Oregon COVID-19 websites:
 - [Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries](#)
 - [Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries: Sick time and family leave laws](#)
 - [Oregon Work Share](#), an alternative for employers and workers who may be facing layoff. Instead of reducing staff, Work Share allows employers to reduce work hours. Partial unemployment insurance benefits are then paid to supplement workers' reduced wages.
- California COVID-19 websites:
 - [California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development COVID-19 Response Page for Businesses](#)
 - [California COVID-19 information page](#)
- [Idaho COVID-19 business resources](#)

Federal guidance for small businesses, including information on the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program:

- [Small Business Administration: Disaster Assistance](#)
- [Coronavirus: Small Business Guidance and Loan Resources](#)
- The [Small Business Owner's Guide to the CARES Act](#). Information on Paycheck Protection Program loans, the Small Business Debt Relief Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loans and Emergency Economic Injury Grants, small business counseling, small business contracting, and small business tax provisions.
- The [Coronavirus Emergency Loans, Small Business Guide and Checklist](#). Prepared by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to help small businesses and self-employed individuals prepare to file for a loan.

This report was summarized by staff from a variety of sources including the WCSPA newsletter, Saving Seafood, National Fisherman, Govtrack.org, and others.

Section 12005. Assistance to fishery participants

(a) In General

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized to provide assistance to Tribal, subsistence, commercial, and charter fishery participants affected by the novel coronavirus (COVID–19), which may include direct relief payments.

(b) Fishery participants

For the purposes of this section, *fishery participants* include Tribes, persons, fishing communities, aquaculture businesses not otherwise eligible for assistance under part 1416 of title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations for losses related to COVID–19, processors, or other fishery-related businesses, who have incurred, as a direct or indirect result of the coronavirus pandemic—

- (1) economic revenue losses greater than 35 percent as compared to the prior 5-year average revenue; or
- (2) any negative impacts to subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial fisheries.

(c) Rolling basis

Funds may be awarded under this section on a rolling basis, and within a fishing season, to ensure rapid delivery of funds during the COVID–19 pandemic.

(d) Appropriations

In addition to funds that are otherwise made available to assist fishery participants under this Act, there are authorized to be appropriated, and there are appropriated, \$300,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2021, to carry out this section, of which up to 2 percent may be used for administration and oversight activities.

(e) Emergency requirement

The amount provided by this section is designated by the Congress as being for an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

PFMC
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