





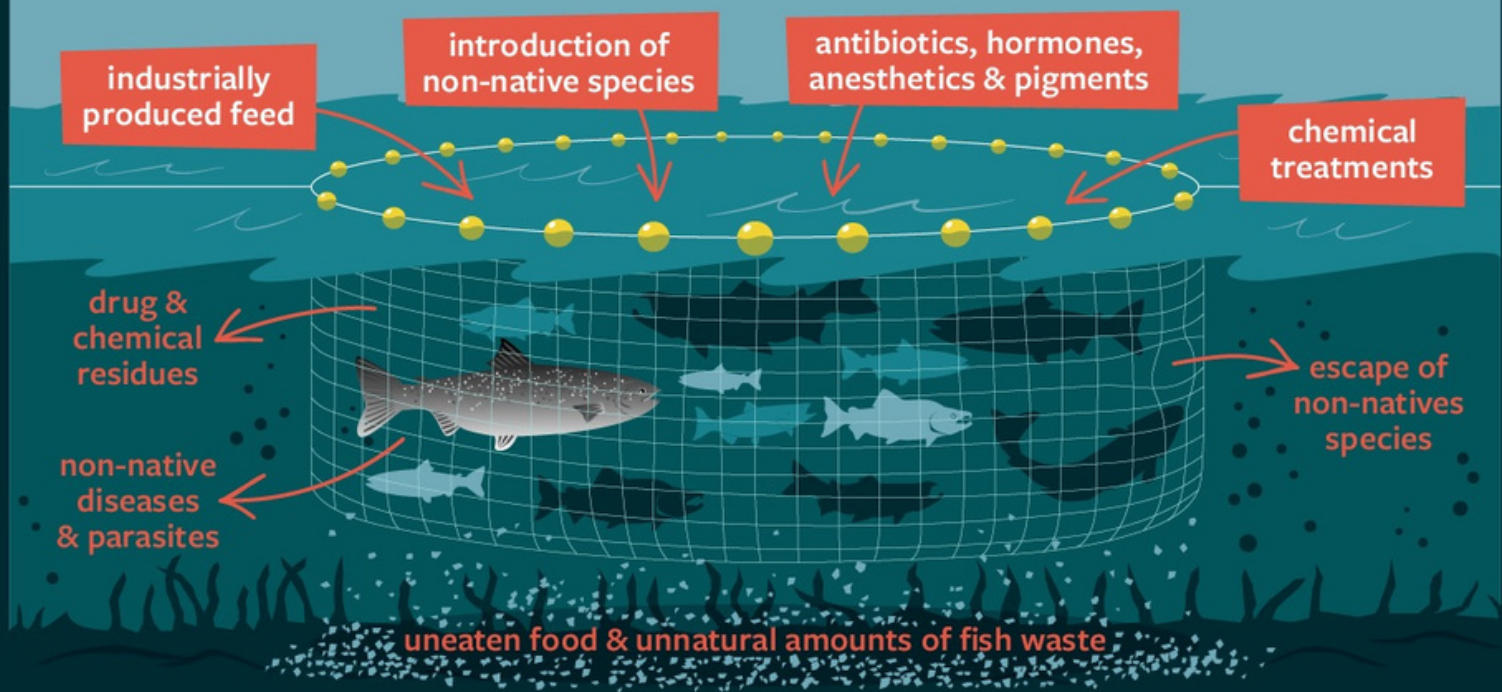




The Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture Act, or “AQUAA Act” was introduced on June 7th, 2023 in the Senate ([S. 1861](#)) by Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS) and cosponsored by Brian Schatz (D-HI). The following week, on June 12, Representative Kat Cammack (R-FL) introduced the House companion Bill ([H.R. 4013](#)) with cosponsors Representatives Ed Case (D-HI) Mike Ezell (R-MS).

The AQUAA Act seeks to allow industrial-scale food production at sea - away from any meaningful oversight and to the detriment of fishing communities, consumer health, animal welfare, and the marine environment. These facilities would directly discharge untreated fish waste and other pollutants into surrounding waters, attract and endanger marine life, spread lethal pests and disease, and compromise wild fish through farmed fish escapement.

-  The bill does not mention the **Marine Mammal Protection Act or Endangered Species Act**, despite the direct impacts facilities would have on marine mammals and endangered species.
-  It is silent on **pest and disease prevention and treatment**, including when and how farmed fish must be tested, as well as methods to treat and prevent disease breakouts. The most common treatments kill nearby marine life and degrade water quality.
-  The bill would allow farming of **genetically modified and transgenic fish**, which threaten the environment and public health. When GMO fish inevitably escape, they will cause genetic degradation of our wild stocks. Eating farmed GMO fish is also a significant public health issue.
-  The bill gives **blanket authority** to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to **administer veterinary drugs** (such as antibiotics and sea lice chemicals), **regulate ingredients in fish feed** (such as overfished species and GMO corn/soy), and **source farmed fish stock** (like cultivating wild caught juveniles). NOAA has been a champion of offshore finfish farming for decades and could hastily come to permitting conclusions.
-  The bill **ignores monitoring and regulating workplace conditions**. Maintaining industrial ocean fish farms is one of the world’s most dangerous jobs.
-  The bill relies on a failed strategy for decommissioning facilities – the same method that has proven ineffective in the offshore drilling industry.



The bill **limits public input**. Public comment periods are restricted to only once per facility application “to the extent predictable.” There is no mention of stakeholder engagement on the Aquaculture Subcommittee, which **should include voices from conservation organizations and the fishing industry**.



The bill **ignores traceability**. The public has a right to know about every stage of production, including where fish are sourced and processed, and what they are fed.



The bill **does not fully protect states opposing the industry**. The “state opt out” provision requires facilities to comply with state laws outright banning or prohibiting certain types of aquaculture. However, this fails to protect states that have effectively banned the industry through other means, such as refraining from regulating or permitting the industry at the agency level, or by defunding regulatory activities through the state’s budget.



The bill **does not protect our wild-capture fishing industries**. There are no market-based mechanisms to protect wild-caught fisheries from the harm anticipated by the increase in marine finfish aquaculture.



The bill has **neither a requirement nor an incentive for farmed fish to stay in the U.S.** The U.S. already exports a significant amount of seafood, and the bill provides no guarantee that it will reduce the seafood trade deficit.



The bill promotes **outdated and unnecessary fish farming methods**. In the decades of failed federal bills to authorize this industry, technology has progressed and there are better alternatives out there. When combined with wild-capture fishing and ocean-based mariculture of shellfish and plants, land-based recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) can help increase seafood production without the environmental and socio-economic havoc associated with offshore finfish farms.

