

118TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To require the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish an assessment program for commercial-scale offshore aquaculture through demonstration projects, to establish Aquaculture Centers of Excellence, to support aquaculture workforce development and working waterfronts, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. SCHATZ) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To require the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish an assessment program for commercial-scale offshore aquaculture through demonstration projects, to establish Aquaculture Centers of Excellence, to support aquaculture workforce development and working waterfronts, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the  
3 “Marine Aquaculture Research for America Act of 2025”  
4 or the “MARA Act of 2025”.

5 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for  
6 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.  
Sec. 2. Purposes.  
Sec. 3. Definitions.

TITLE I—OFFICE OF AQUACULTURE

Sec. 101. Office of Aquaculture.

TITLE II—COMMERCIAL-SCALE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Sec. 201. Assessment program for offshore aquaculture.  
Sec. 202. Permits for demonstration projects for offshore aquaculture facilities.  
Sec. 203. Coordination of permit reviews for demonstration projects.  
Sec. 204. Reporting by assessment program participants.  
Sec. 205. Rule of construction; savings provisions.

TITLE III—WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, FINANCING, AND OTHER  
SUPPORT

Sec. 301. General support for industry.  
Sec. 302. Aquaculture Centers of Excellence.  
Sec. 303. Working waterfronts preservation grant program.  
Sec. 304. Outreach on sustainable offshore aquaculture.

TITLE IV—STUDIES AND REPORTS

Sec. 401. Study on offshore aquaculture by Ocean Studies Board of the Na-  
tional Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.  
Sec. 402. Report on offshore aquaculture by Government Accountability Office.

7 **SEC. 2. PURPOSES.**

8 The purposes of this Act are—

9 (1) to authorize the National Oceanic and At-  
10 mospheric Administration to establish and study  
11 commercial-scale demonstration projects to answer  
12 scientific questions needed to safely and sustainably  
13 regulate offshore aquaculture in the United States;

1           (2) to commission a study and report to assess  
2           the environmental and regulatory viability of a  
3           United States offshore aquaculture industry;

4           (3) to support aquaculture workforce develop-  
5           ment and working waterfronts by creating new jobs  
6           and to support existing jobs and businesses within  
7           the seafood industry of the United States, including  
8           jobs and businesses for traditional participants in  
9           the fishing industry;

10          (4) to establish Aquaculture Centers of Excel-  
11          lence to meet the needs of the growing domestic sus-  
12          tainable aquaculture industry; and

13          (5) to reduce the United States seafood trade  
14          deficit by expanding the domestic supply of seafood  
15          through the production of sustainable offshore aqua-  
16          culture.

17 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

18       In this Act:

19           (1) ADMINISTRATION.—The term “Administra-  
20           tion” means the National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
21           Administration.

22           (2) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-  
23           trator” means the Administrator of the Administra-  
24           tion.

1           (3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CON-  
2       GRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Con-  
3       gress” means—

4           (A) the Committee on Commerce, Science,  
5       and Transportation, the Committee on Environ-  
6       ment and Public Works, and the Committee on  
7       Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Sen-  
8       ate; and

9           (B) the Committee on Natural Resources,  
10      the Committee on Agriculture, and the Com-  
11      mittee on Transportation and Infrastructure of  
12      the House of Representatives.

13       (4) AQUACULTURE.—The term “aqua-  
14      culture”—

15           (A) means any activity involved in the  
16      propagation, rearing, or attempted propagation  
17      or rearing, of cultured species, including the  
18      capture and rearing of broodstock; and

19           (B) does not include the practice of—

20           (i) capturing juvenile finfish to rear to  
21      maturity in an aquaculture facility for sub-  
22      sequent commercial sale; or

23           (ii) the practice of rearing and releas-  
24      ing cultured species for the purpose of en-  
25      hancing wild populations.

1           (5) AQUACULTURE STAKEHOLDER.—The term  
2           “aquaculture stakeholder” means—

3                   (A) an owner or operator of an offshore  
4           aquaculture facility;

5                   (B) a Regional Fishery Management Coun-  
6           cil established under section 302(a) of the Mag-  
7           nuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Man-  
8           agement Act (16 U.S.C. 1852(a));

9                   (C) an interstate fisheries commission;

10                  (D) a conservation organization;

11                  (E) a fisheries association;

12                  (F) a State or county government;

13                  (G) an Indian Tribe;

14                  (H) a Native Hawaiian organization;

15                  (I) a Native Hawaiian community;

16                  (J) a Tribal or Indigenous community;

17                  (K) a Federal or State agency with inter-  
18           ests in aquaculture; or

19                  (L) any other interested party.

20           (6) COASTAL STATE.—The term “coastal  
21           State” has the meaning given the term “coastal  
22           state” in section 304(4) of the Coastal Zone Man-  
23           agement Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1453(4)).

24           (7) CULTURED SPECIES.—The term “cultured  
25           species”—

1 (A) means any species propagated and  
2 reared for marine aquaculture;

3 (B) includes larval marine shellfish species  
4 that self-recruit in the offshore environment;  
5 and

6 (C) excludes any member of the class Aves,  
7 Reptilia, or Mammalia.

8 (8) ESCAPE.—The term “escape” means the es-  
9 cape of juvenile- or adult-farmed organisms, viable  
10 gametes, or fertilized eggs spawned by farmed orga-  
11 nisms from offshore aquaculture facilities.

12 (9) EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE.—

13 (A) IN GENERAL.—Unless otherwise speci-  
14 fied by the President in the public interest in  
15 a writing published in the Federal Register, the  
16 term “exclusive economic zone” means a zone,  
17 the outer boundary of which—

18 (i) except as provided by clause (ii), is  
19 200 nautical miles from the baseline from  
20 which the breadth of the territorial sea is  
21 measured; or

22 (ii)(I) if an applicable maritime  
23 boundary treaty is in force or is being pro-  
24 visionally applied by the United States, is  
25 established by that treaty; or

1 (II) in the absence of such a treaty  
2 and in a case in which the distance be-  
3 tween the United States and another coun-  
4 try is less than 400 nautical miles, is a line  
5 equidistant between the United States and  
6 the other country.

7 (B) INNER BOUNDARY.—Without affecting  
8 any Presidential proclamation with regard to  
9 the establishment of the United States terri-  
10 torial sea or exclusive economic zone, the inner  
11 boundary of the exclusive economic zone is—

12 (i) in the case of the coastal States, a  
13 line coterminous with the seaward bound-  
14 ary of each such State, as described in sec-  
15 tion 4 of the Submerged Lands Act (43  
16 U.S.C. 1312);

17 (ii) in the case of the Commonwealth  
18 of Puerto Rico, a line 9 nautical miles  
19 from the coastline of the Commonwealth of  
20 Puerto Rico;

21 (iii) in the case of American Samoa,  
22 the United States Virgin Islands, or Guam,  
23 a line 3 geographic miles from the coast-  
24 lines of American Samoa, the United

1 States Virgin Islands, or Guam, respec-  
2 tively; or

3 (iv) in the case of the Commonwealth  
4 of the Northern Mariana Islands—

5 (I) the coastline of the Common-  
6 wealth of the Northern Mariana Is-  
7 lands, until the Commonwealth of the  
8 Northern Mariana Islands is granted  
9 authority by the United States to reg-  
10 ulate all fishing to a line seaward of  
11 its coastline; and

12 (II) upon the United States  
13 grant of such authority, the line es-  
14 tablished by such grant of authority.

15 (C) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in  
16 this paragraph may be construed to diminish  
17 the authority of the Department of Defense, the  
18 Department of the Interior, or any other Fed-  
19 eral agency.

20 (10) FISHERY STAKEHOLDERS.—The term  
21 “fishery stakeholders” means—

22 (A) subsistence fishery participants and  
23 their dependents;

24 (B) fishing vessel crews;



1 (C) fish processor and distribution work-  
2 ers;

3 (D) recreational fisheries;

4 (E) Tribal fisheries; and

5 (F) territorial fishing communities, includ-  
6 ing such communities in American Samoa,  
7 Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern  
8 Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the United  
9 States Virgin Islands.

10 (11) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”  
11 has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the  
12 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance  
13 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

14 (12) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—  
15 The term “institution of higher education” has the  
16 meaning given that term in section 201 of the High-  
17 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

18 (13) NATIVE HAWAIIAN COMMUNITY.—The  
19 term “Native Hawaiian community” means the dis-  
20 tinct Native Hawaiian indigenous political commu-  
21 nity that Congress, exercising its plenary power over  
22 Native American affairs, has recognized and with  
23 which Congress has implemented a special political  
24 and trust relationship.

1           (14) NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.—The  
2           term “Native Hawaiian organization” has the mean-  
3           ing given that term in section 6207 of the Elemen-  
4           tary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20  
5           U.S.C. 7517) and includes the Department of Ha-  
6           waiian Home Lands and the Office of Hawaiian Af-  
7           fairs.

8           (15) NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PRO-  
9           GRAM.—The term “national sea grant college pro-  
10          gram” means the program maintained under section  
11          204(a) of the National Sea Grant College Program  
12          Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(a)).

13          (16) OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE.—The term  
14          “offshore aquaculture” means aquaculture con-  
15          ducted in the exclusive economic zone.

16          (17) OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE FACILITY.—The  
17          term “offshore aquaculture facility” means—

18                 (A) an installation or structure used, in  
19                 whole or in part, for offshore aquaculture; or

20                 (B) an area of the seabed, water column,  
21                 or the sediment used for offshore aquaculture.

22          (18) STATE.—The term “State” means each of  
23          the several States, the District of Columbia, and  
24          each commonwealth, territory, or possession of the  
25          United States.

1           (19) TRIBAL FISHERY.—The term “Tribal fish-  
2       ery” means a fishery that is—

3                   (A) owned, operated, or managed by a  
4       Tribal or Indigenous community; or

5                   (B) located in an area—

6                           (i) that is subject to the jurisdiction  
7       of an Indian Tribe; and

8                           (ii) for which the Indian Tribe has  
9       sovereign authority over fishing activity in  
10      the area.

11           (20) TRIBAL LAND.—The term “Tribal land”  
12      means land that is subject to the jurisdiction of an  
13      Indian Tribe.

14           (21) TRIBAL OR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY.—  
15      The term “Tribal or Indigenous community” means  
16      a population of people who are—

17                   (A) enrolled members of an Indian Tribe;

18                   (B) members of an Alaska Native or Na-  
19      tive Hawaiian community or organization; or

20                   (C) members of any other community of  
21      Indigenous people located in a State.

# **TITLE I—OFFICE OF AQUACULTURE**

## **3 SEC. 101. OFFICE OF AQUACULTURE.**

4 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within  
5 the headquarters of the National Marine Fisheries Service  
6 of the Administration the Office of Aquaculture (in this  
7 section referred to as the “Office”).

8 (b) RESOURCES.—The Administrator shall ensure  
9 the Office is provided with sufficient resources to carry  
10 out the duties of the Office under subsection (d).

11 (c) REPRESENTATION AT REGIONAL FISHERIES OF-  
12 FICES.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall pro-  
14 vide for representation of the Office in each of the  
15 regional fisheries offices of the Administration.

16 (2) MINIMUM PRESENCE.—In carrying out  
17 paragraph (1), the Administrator—

18 (A) shall provide for the placement of at  
19 least one regional aquaculture coordinator from  
20 the Office in each regional fisheries office;

21 (B) shall otherwise ensure that the rep-  
22 resentation of the Office at a regional fisheries  
23 office is, at a minimum, sufficient to permit the  
24 Office to fulfill the duties of the Office under  
25 subsection (d); and

1 (C) may increase that representation to the  
2 extent warranted by the activity and interest of  
3 aquaculture stakeholders in the region.

4 (d) DUTIES.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Office shall—

6 (A) coordinate the implementation of this  
7 Act, including administration of—

8 (i) the aquaculture research program  
9 established under subsection (e);

10 (ii) the offshore aquaculture assess-  
11 ment program established under section  
12 201; and

13 (iii) the issuance of permits under sec-  
14 tion 202;

15 (B) coordinate regulatory, scientific, out-  
16 reach, and international issues related to aqua-  
17 culture within the Administration;

18 (C) collaborate with and leverage existing  
19 efforts by the national sea grant college pro-  
20 gram—

21 (i) to conduct outreach, education, ex-  
22 tension services, and training efforts for  
23 aquaculture and offshore aquaculture; and

24 (ii) to engage with aquaculture stake-  
25 holders and, from time to time, convene

1 conferences for aquaculture stakeholders to  
2 exchange information and ideas;

3 (D) maintain aquaculture capacity in the  
4 regions covered by the regional fisheries offices  
5 of the Administration; and

6 (E) develop recommendations for perform-  
7 ance standards for offshore aquaculture oper-  
8 ations that, at a minimum—

9 (i) encourage development of offshore  
10 aquaculture in a manner that complies  
11 with environmental law;

12 (ii) are based on the best scientific in-  
13 formation available;

14 (iii) take into account traditional  
15 knowledge of Tribal and Indigenous com-  
16 munities as appropriate to the region;

17 (iv) are adaptive to offshore aqua-  
18 culture developments, such as updates in  
19 technology and changes in environmental  
20 conditions; and

21 (v) prefer species that are native or  
22 historically naturalized to the region; and

23 (F) prioritize the health of cultured spe-  
24 cies.

25 (2) AGREEMENTS WITH STATES.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—Upon request of the  
2 Governor of a coastal State, the Office shall  
3 enter into an agreement with the State to allow  
4 the State, and aquaculture stakeholders in the  
5 State as appropriate, to participate in the ac-  
6 tivities authorized under sections 201 and 203  
7 and titles III and IV, as though—

8 (i) the aquaculture conducted in the  
9 State’s coastal waters were offshore aqua-  
10 culture; and

11 (ii) facilities for aquaculture in the  
12 State’s coastal waters were offshore aqua-  
13 culture facilities.

14 (B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in  
15 this paragraph or in any agreement entered  
16 into under this paragraph shall be construed to  
17 affect the authority of the Administrator to  
18 issue permits for or regulate aquaculture in  
19 State waters, except as expressly provided in  
20 such an agreement.

21 (e) AQUACULTURE RESEARCH PROGRAM AND DU-  
22 TIES.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall es-  
24 tablish, and provide resources (in addition to the re-  
25 sources required under subsection (b)) for, an aqua-

1 culture research program that draws upon the sci-  
2 entific capacity of programs of the Administration,  
3 such as the Fisheries Science Centers, the national  
4 sea grant college program, and the National Centers  
5 for Coastal Ocean Science, to support the efforts of  
6 the Office to implement this Act.

7 (2) FUNCTIONS.—As part of the aquaculture  
8 research program established under paragraph (1),  
9 the Office shall—

10 (A) ensure that commercial-scale offshore  
11 aquaculture demonstration projects for which  
12 permits are issued under section 202 are sci-  
13 entifically monitored to support the implemen-  
14 tation of this Act;

15 (B) evaluate data;

16 (C) conduct additional research to support  
17 the development of sustainable offshore aqua-  
18 culture;

19 (D) administer support for industry under  
20 section 301;

21 (E) administer the Aquaculture Centers of  
22 Excellence under section 302;

23 (F) administer the contract to conduct the  
24 study described in section 401; and



1 (G) coordinate the engagement of the Ad-  
2 ministration with the Comptroller General of  
3 the United States as the Comptroller General  
4 prepares the report required by section 402.

5 (f) BUDGET REQUEST.—The Administrator shall in-  
6 clude, in the budget justification materials submitted to  
7 Congress in support of the budget of the President for  
8 a fiscal year pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, United  
9 States Code, a request for funding for the Office as a sep-  
10 arate line item with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

11 **TITLE II—COMMERCIAL-SCALE**  
12 **DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS**

13 **SEC. 201. ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR OFFSHORE AQUA-**  
14 **CULTURE.**

15 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—Not later than  
16 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the  
17 Administrator shall establish an assessment program (in  
18 this section referred to as the “assessment program”) with  
19 the objective of assessing the viability of offshore aqua-  
20 culture—

21 (1) in light of changing circumstances and ad-  
22 vances in technology; and

23 (2) using the best available science, information  
24 from aquaculture stakeholders, and information de-

1 developed from demonstration projects for which per-  
2 mits are issued under section 202.

(b) ELEMENTS.—At a minimum, the assessment program shall examine the following in order to determine the viability of offshore aquaculture:

(1) The ability of different commercial-scale facility designs and operational methods—

(A) to survive various atmospheric and ocean conditions to the extent possible, including high wind speeds or high-energy ocean conditions associated with severe weather, or tidal or tsunami activity, without—

13 (i) escapes;

14 (ii) loss of or damage to infrastruc-  
15 ture; or

16 (iii) wildlife entanglement resulting  
17 from loss or damaged infrastructure;

(B) to prevent adverse wildlife impacts to the extent possible, including entanglements of large whales, sea turtles, and other species protected under—

22 (i) the Endangered Species Act of  
23 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.); and

(ii) the Marine Mammal Protection  
Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.);

1 (C) to prevent adverse impacts on the ma-  
2 rine environment to the extent possible, includ-  
3 ing impacts to habitat, water chemistry, and  
4 wildlife; and

5 (D) to prevent adverse impacts on naviga-  
6 tion and safety, to the extent possible, to exist-  
7 ing ocean users due to offshore aquaculture fa-  
8 cilities, including requirements for operations,  
9 navigation, and transit associated with such fa-  
10 cilities.

11 (2) The ability of different technologies to pro-  
12 vide reliable and timely data on offshore aquaculture  
13 facilities, including visual data and other relevant  
14 data types, on a regular basis to enable the Adminis-  
15 trator to monitor—

16 (A) the compliance of demonstration  
17 projects for which permits are issued under sec-  
18 tion 202 with the requirements under sub-  
19 section (b) of such section;

20 (B) impacts on the marine environment;  
21 and

22 (C) interference with existing uses of the  
23 water bodies in which demonstration projects  
24 for which permits are issued under section 202  
25 are located.

1           (3) The relative risks, benefits, and costs of  
2       various types of offshore aquaculture, including dif-  
3       ferent species of finfish in different geographies and  
4       under varying climactic and ecological conditions.

5       (c) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 2 years  
6   after the date on which the Administrator establishes the  
7   assessment program, the Administrator shall publish,  
8   make available to the public, and submit to the National  
9   Academy of Sciences and the Comptroller General of the  
10  United States, a report that includes the following:

11           (1) A description of each demonstration project  
12       for which a permit is issued under section 202, in-  
13       cluding documentation supporting the issuance of  
14       the permit.

15           (2) A summary of the information submitted to  
16       the Administrator for each such demonstration  
17       project.

18           (3) A description of the progress made toward  
19       meeting the objective described in subsection (a).

20   **SEC. 202. PERMITS FOR DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS FOR**  
21                   **OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE FACILITIES.**

22       (a) ISSUANCE OF PERMITS.—After the Administrator  
23   establishes the assessment program under section 201, the  
24   Administrator shall issue permits for demonstration

1 projects for proposed offshore aquaculture facilities in fur-  
2 therance of the assessment program.

3 (b) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.—To be eligible for  
4 the issuance of a permit under subsection (a), a dem-  
5 onstration project is required to—

6 (1) advance the objective described in section  
7 201(a);

8 (2) cultivate only native or historically natural-  
9 ized species that pose a minimal threat of harm to  
10 wildlife and the ecosystem in which the project is lo-  
11 cated;

12 (3) incorporate design and operational practices  
13 that minimize the risk of escape, wildlife entangle-  
14 ment, and adverse pollution impacts;

15 (4) develop an escape response and infrastruc-  
16 ture loss or damage plan that minimizes the impact  
17 of any escapes or infrastructure loss or damage on  
18 the marine environment and on other uses of the  
19 water body in which the project is located;

20 (5) comply with all applicable requirements  
21 of—

22 (A) the Federal Water Pollution Control  
23 Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) (commonly re-  
24 ferred to as the “Clean Water Act”);

1 (B) the Endangered Species Act of 1973  
2 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.);

3 (C) the Marine Mammal Protection Act of  
4 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.); and

5 (D) the National Environmental Policy Act  
6 of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.);

7 (6) maximize compatibility with, and prevent or  
8 minimize displacement of, existing uses and users of  
9 the marine environment in the near vicinity of where  
10 the project is located;

11 (7) conform to best practices to avoid or mini-  
12 mize the use of antibiotics and other pharma-  
13 ceuticals and minimize the release of such pharma-  
14 ceuticals into the environment; and

15 (8) be designed and managed in partnership  
16 with—

17 (A) a land-grant college or university (as  
18 defined in section 1404 of the National Agricul-  
19 tural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy  
20 Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103));

21 (B) a historically black college or univer-  
22 sity (as defined by the term “part B institu-  
23 tion” in section 322 of the Higher Education  
24 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061));

1 (C) a 1994 Institution (as defined in sec-  
2 tion 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-  
3 Grant Status Act of 1994 (Public Law 103–  
4 382; 7 U.S.C. 301 note)); or

5 (D) a sea grant college (as defined in sec-  
6 tion 203 of the National Sea Grant College  
7 Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1122)).

8 (c) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—A person that holds  
9 a permit for a demonstration project issued under sub-  
10 section (a) may conduct offshore aquaculture consistent  
11 with—

12 (1) this Act, including regulations prescribed to  
13 carry out this Act; and

14 (2) other applicable provisions of law, including  
15 regulations.

16 (d) APPLICATIONS.—A person seeking a permit for  
17 a demonstration project shall submit to the Administrator  
18 an application that specifies—

19 (1) the proposed location of the offshore aqua-  
20 culture facility and the location of on-shore facilities  
21 used for propagation or rearing of cultured species,  
22 such as hatcheries or research operations;

23 (2) the type of aquaculture operations that will  
24 be conducted at all facilities described in paragraph  
25 (1);

1           (3) the cultured species, or a specified range of  
2           species, to be propagated or reared, or both, at the  
3           offshore aquaculture facility;

4           (4)(A) the source of eggs, larvae, or juvenile  
5           cultured species that will be used in offshore aqua-  
6           culture operations;

7           (B) an analysis of the likely ecosystem impacts  
8           of such operations, such as the spread of pathogens;  
9           and

10          (C) the information upon which the analysis  
11          was based;

12          (5) plans to respond to—

13               (A) a natural disaster;

14               (B) an escape;

15               (C) disease;

16               (D) loss or damage to infrastructure; and

17               (E) other circumstances designated by the  
18          Administrator; and

19          (6) such other design, construction, and oper-  
20          ational information as the Administrator may re-  
21          quire to ensure the integrity of the operations and  
22          contingency planning.

23          (e) NOTICE, PUBLIC COMMENT, AND OBJECTIONS.—

24               (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall—



1 (A) not later than 90 days after receiving  
2 an application under this section, publish in the  
3 Federal Register a notice summarizing the ap-  
4 plication; and

5 (B) invite and consider public comments,  
6 and formal objections from any Governor or  
7 Tribal leader of a specially affected coastal ju-  
8 risdiction, on applications for permits under  
9 this section.

10 (2) SPECIALLY AFFECTED COASTAL JURISDIC-  
11 TION.—In this subsection, the term “specially af-  
12 fected coastal jurisdiction” means any coastal State  
13 or Indian Tribe—

14 (A) the land, Tribal land, or waters of  
15 which—

16 (i) are adjacent to the Federal waters  
17 in which the project will be conducted; and

18 (ii) are used, or are scheduled to be  
19 used, as a support base for the project;  
20 and

21 (B) for which there is a reasonable prob-  
22 ability of significant effect on uses of land,  
23 Tribal land, or water from the project.

24 (f) PRIORITY CONSIDERATION.—In considering ap-  
25 plications for permits for demonstration projects under

1 this section, the Administrator shall give priority consider-  
2 ation to applications for demonstration projects—

3 (1) owned or operated by applicants who can  
4 demonstrate that the demonstration project will di-  
5 rectly benefit individuals who are already partici-  
6 pating in the agricultural, wild-caught fishery, or  
7 aquaculture industries who have been negatively im-  
8 pacted by the COVID–19 pandemic, natural disas-  
9 ters, or major disasters declared under section 401  
10 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-  
11 gency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170); or

12 (2) sited within an Aquaculture Opportunity  
13 Area identified by the Secretary of Commerce in ac-  
14 cordance with section 7 of Executive Order 13921  
15 (16 U.S.C. 1801 note; relating to promoting Amer-  
16 ican seafood competitiveness and economic growth).

17 (g) SOCIOECONOMIC DATA.—In considering applica-  
18 tions for permits for demonstration projects under this  
19 section, and to support the study described in section 401,  
20 the report required by section 402, and the assessment  
21 program established under section 201, the Administrator  
22 shall collect socioeconomic data associated with the owner  
23 or operator of, and communities employed or otherwise af-  
24 fected by, each demonstration project.

1 (h) DECISIONS WITH RESPECT TO ISSUANCE, DE-  
2 FERRAL, OR DENIAL.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after  
4 the conclusion of the period for public comments  
5 under subsection (e) with respect to an application  
6 for a permit for a demonstration project under this  
7 section, the Administrator shall—

8 (A) issue the permit, if the Administrator  
9 determines the application complies with the re-  
10 quirements of this Act, the National Environ-  
11 mental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et  
12 seq.), and other applicable law;

13 (B) if the Administrator determines that  
14 the application does not comply with the re-  
15 quirements described in subparagraph (A) and  
16 can be modified to comply with those require-  
17 ments—

18 (i) defer the decision on the permit;

19 and

20 (ii) provide to the applicant a notice  
21 that specifies modifications to the proposed  
22 demonstration project needed for a permit  
23 to be issued; or

24 (C) if the Administrator determines that  
25 the application does not comply with the re-

1           quirements described in subparagraph (A) and  
2           that the application cannot be modified to com-  
3           ply with such requirements, deny the permit  
4           and provide a justification for the denial.

5           (2) OTHER APPROVAL.—

6                   (A) IN GENERAL.—An application for a  
7           permit for a demonstration project under this  
8           section shall be considered approved, as if a  
9           permit for the application had been issued  
10          under paragraph (1)(A), if—

11                   (i) the Administrator does not take  
12           action under subparagraph (A), (B), or (C)  
13           of paragraph (1) within 90 days after the  
14           conclusion of the period for public com-  
15           ments under subsection (e) with respect to  
16           the application;

17                   (ii) no formal objection to the applica-  
18           tion has been received from the Governor  
19           or Tribal leader of a specially affected  
20           coastal jurisdiction (as defined in sub-  
21           section (e)); and

22                   (iii) the Administrator has determined  
23           that the application complies with the re-  
24           quirements described in paragraph (1)(A).

1 (B) PROCESS.—The Administrator shall  
2 establish a process for the approval of applica-  
3 tions under this paragraph.

4 (i) EFFECTIVE PERIOD.—A permit for a demonstra-  
5 tion project issued under this section—

6 (1) shall be in effect during the 10-year period  
7 beginning on the date on which the project begins  
8 in-water operations; and

9 (2) may be renewed as provided by subsection  
10 (k).

11 (j) RENEWAL.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator may  
13 renew a permit, that has not been revoked, for a  
14 demonstration project issued under this section for  
15 an additional 10-year period after the 10-year period  
16 described in subsection (i)(1) if—

17 (A) the owner or operator of the project  
18 submits to the Administrator a proposal for re-  
19 newal of the permit by a date determined by  
20 the Administrator; and

21 (B) the Administrator determines that the  
22 permit, as modified by the proposal, remains in  
23 compliance with the requirements described in  
24 subsection (j)(1).

1           (2) NOTICE AND PUBLIC COMMENT.—The Ad-  
2       ministrator shall—

3           (A) publish in the Federal Register a no-  
4       tice summarizing each proposal received under  
5       paragraph (1) with respect to the renewal of a  
6       permit;

7           (B) invite public comments for a period of  
8       not less than 60 days regarding each such pro-  
9       posal; and

10          (C) consider such comments in deter-  
11       mining whether to approve the renewal of the  
12       permit.

13       (k) AUTHORITY TO MODIFY OR TERMINATE PARTICI-  
14   PATION OF DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS AND ORDER RE-  
15   MOVAL OF FACILITIES.—The Administrator may require  
16   modifications to a demonstration project for which a per-  
17   mit is issued under this section, terminate such a permit,  
18   or order the removal of an offshore aquaculture facility  
19   authorized to operate under such a permit, if—

20          (1)(A) the project incurs an incident involving  
21       a death or serious personal injury and the Adminis-  
22       trator determines that negligence of the project op-  
23       erator was the cause of or a contributing factor to  
24       the incident;

1 (B) operation of the project results in a viola-  
2 tion of—

3 (i) the Endangered Species Act of 1973  
4 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.); or

5 (ii) the Marine Mammal Protection Act of  
6 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.);

7 (C) the owner or operator of the project fails to  
8 comply with all of the terms and conditions of—

9 (i) the permit; or

10 (ii) modifications required by the Adminis-  
11 trator under this subsection; or

12 (D) the Administrator determines that oper-  
13 ation of the demonstration project would be unsafe  
14 or result in unacceptable negative impacts to—

15 (i) the marine environment;

16 (ii) nearby communities; or

17 (iii) other users of the water body in which  
18 the project is located; and

19 (2) before requiring a modification to the dem-  
20 onstration project, terminating the permit, or order-  
21 ing the removal of the offshore aquaculture facil-  
22 ity—

23 (A) the Administrator provides a warning  
24 notice to the owner or operator of the project;  
25 and

1 (B) the owner or operator is given an op-  
2 portunity to address the Administrator's con-  
3 cerns.

4 (l) COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT REVIEW.—  
5 The submission of an application for a permit for a dem-  
6 onstration project under this section shall trigger the right  
7 of review by a coastal State under the Coastal Zone Man-  
8 agement Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.).

9 **SEC. 203. COORDINATION OF PERMIT REVIEWS FOR DEM-**  
10 **ONSTRATION PROJECTS.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administration shall serve as  
12 the lead Federal agency for purposes of providing informa-  
13 tion on Federal permitting requirements for demonstra-  
14 tion projects under section 202.

15 (b) INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall con-  
17 vene representatives of the agencies described in  
18 paragraph (2) to provide prospective applicants for  
19 permits for demonstration projects under section  
20 202 an opportunity for informal consultation with  
21 such agencies.

22 (2) AGENCIES DESCRIBED.—The agencies de-  
23 scribed in this paragraph are the following:

24 (A) The Department of Agriculture.

25 (B) The Environmental Protection Agency.



1 (C) The Army Corps of Engineers.

2 (D) The Department in which the Coast  
3 Guard is operating.

4 (E) The Department of Defense.

5 (F) Any other agency the Administrator  
6 considers appropriate.

7 (3) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this  
8 subsection shall preclude an applicant or a prospec-  
9 tive applicant from contacting Federal agencies di-  
10 rectly.

11 (c) ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS.—To the extent al-  
12 lowable under the National Environmental Policy Act of  
13 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), any environmental analysis  
14 or environmental impact statement required under that  
15 Act for offshore aquaculture activities proposed to be car-  
16 ried out under a demonstration project under section 202  
17 shall be conducted through a single, consolidated environ-  
18 mental review and the Administration, through the Office  
19 of Aquaculture established by section 101, shall serve as  
20 the lead Federal agency.

21 (d) COORDINATION OF PERMIT REVIEWS.—To the  
22 extent practicable under this Act and all other applicable  
23 laws, including regulations, Federal agencies with permit-  
24 ting requirements applicable to offshore aquaculture ac-  
25 tivities proposed to be carried out under a demonstration

1 project under section 202 shall coordinate their review  
2 processes in order to provide a timely response to an appli-  
3 cant not later than 180 days after the submission of the  
4 application.

5 **SEC. 204. REPORTING BY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM PARTICI-**  
6 **PANTS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the  
8 date on which a demonstration project for which a permit  
9 is issued under section 202 commences, and annually  
10 thereafter until the demonstration project terminates, the  
11 owner or operator of the demonstration project shall sub-  
12 mit to the Administrator the following:

13 (1) Production data.

14 (2) Information on interactions with wild spe-  
15 cies, mitigation measures taken, and the results of  
16 such interactions and measures.

17 (3) Information on technology and operational  
18 practices used to measure and monitor—

19 (A) effluent;

20 (B) integrity of cage materials and other  
21 gear; and

22 (C) health of the cultivated species.

23 (4) Information on environmental and eco-  
24 system impacts.

1           (5) Data necessary for the Ocean Studies  
2       Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engi-  
3       neering, and Medicine to complete the study de-  
4       scribed in section 401.

5           (6) Owner, operator, and employee demographic  
6       data and other relevant data as determined appro-  
7       priate by the Administrator for purposes of assess-  
8       ing—

9                (A) the direct benefits of the demonstra-  
10      tion project to fishery stakeholders; and

11               (B) the economic and social benefits of the  
12      demonstration project for nearby coastal com-  
13      munities.

14           (7) Information on navigation and safety im-  
15      pacts to existing ocean users.

16           (8) Such additional information as the Adminis-  
17      trator requires to fulfill the goals and objective of  
18      the assessment program established under section  
19      201.

20       (b) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Administrator  
21   shall, upon request, provide technical assistance to owners  
22   and operators of demonstration projects for which permits  
23   are issued under section 202 to comply with the reporting  
24   requirements of this section.

1 (c) EMERGENCY REPORTING.—The Administrator  
2 shall establish an emergency reporting process for each  
3 owner or operator of a demonstration project for which  
4 a permit is issued under section 202 to immediately report  
5 suspected or known interactions between project facilities  
6 or vessels and protected wild species.

7 **SEC. 205. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION; SAVINGS PROVISIONS.**

8 (a) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Any requirement in  
9 this title to identify or consider an impact or effect on  
10 human health or the environment shall be construed as  
11 including a requirement to make such identification or  
12 consideration while taking into account—

13 (1) the cumulative impact of such impact or ef-  
14 fect in the context of all sources of emissions, dis-  
15 charges, or releases from any source, past, present,  
16 or in the reasonably foreseeable future, on the af-  
17 fected environment and population;

18 (2) any characteristics of such environment and  
19 population that may heighten vulnerability to envi-  
20 ronmental pollution and related health risks; and

21 (3) any action or practice that, even if appear-  
22 ing neutral, has the effect of subjecting individuals  
23 to discrimination on the basis of race, color, or na-  
24 tional origin.

1 (b) STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.—A permit for a  
2 demonstration project issued under section 202 shall not  
3 supersede or substitute for any other authorization re-  
4 quired under Federal or State law.

5 (c) APPLICABILITY.—This title does not apply with  
6 respect to applications for a permit in process on the date  
7 of the enactment of this Act or permits that are in effect  
8 on that date.

9 **TITLE III—WORKFORCE DEVEL-**  
10 **OPMENT, FINANCING, AND**  
11 **OTHER SUPPORT**

12 **SEC. 301. GENERAL SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRY.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall support  
14 the development of offshore aquaculture consistent with  
15 this Act and other applicable Federal law.

16 (b) MARKETING AND PROMOTION GRANTS.—The Ad-  
17 ministrator, in consultation with private sector aqua-  
18 culture stakeholders, shall establish and administer a  
19 grant program to support the sale and public perception  
20 of cultured species domestically and internationally.

21 (c) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, in con-  
23 sultation with private sector operators of offshore  
24 aquaculture facilities, academic institutions, and the  
25 national sea grant college program, shall establish

1       and administer a grant program to support the edu-  
2       cation and training of individuals with the skills  
3       needed to manage and operate offshore aquaculture  
4       facilities.

5               (2) AQUACULTURE CENTERS OF EXCEL-  
6       LENCE.—The Administrator may carry out para-  
7       graph (1) through the program established under  
8       section 302(b)(1).

9       (d) REGIONAL NETWORKS.—The Administrator,  
10      through each regional fisheries office of the Administra-  
11      tion, shall organize a network of—

12              (1) regional experts and Federal agency con-  
13      tacts, in coordination with relevant organizations, in-  
14      cluding the national sea grant college program, the  
15      Regional Aquaculture Centers of the Department of  
16      Agriculture, institutions of higher education, and the  
17      Cooperative Extension System of the Department of  
18      Agriculture, to provide technical expertise and exten-  
19      sion services for offshore aquaculture and informa-  
20      tion on Federal permit requirements for offshore  
21      aquaculture; and

22              (2) individuals and businesses interested in  
23      aquaculture operations and products to facilitate  
24      professional development, marketing, mentoring op-

1       portunities, and agency outreach and education on  
2       aquaculture.

3       (e) AQUACULTURE DATABASE.—

4           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall es-  
5       tablish and maintain an aquaculture database within  
6       the Office of Aquaculture established by section 101.

7           (2) INCLUSIONS.—The database required by  
8       paragraph (1) shall include information on research,  
9       technologies, monitoring techniques, best practices,  
10      and advisory board recommendations relating to  
11      aquaculture and offshore aquaculture.

12          (3) SAFEGUARDING OF INFORMATION.—The  
13      Administrator shall make the database required by  
14      paragraph (1) available in a manner that safeguards  
15      personally identifiable information and confidential  
16      business information.

17          (4) PATENTS.—The inclusion of information in  
18      the database required by paragraph (1) shall not be  
19      considered to be publication for purposes of sub-  
20      section (a) or (b) of section 102 of title 35, United  
21      States Code.

22      (f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR OPERA-  
23      TORS.—

24           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, through  
25      the Office of Aquaculture established by section 101

1 and the regional aquaculture coordinators described  
2 in such section, shall organize a program in each re-  
3 gional fisheries office of the Administration to pro-  
4 vide technical assistance to operators of offshore  
5 aquaculture facilities.

6 (2) TAILORING.—The programs required by  
7 paragraph (1) shall be tailored to meet the unique  
8 needs of each region.

9 (3) CONSULTATIONS.—Under each program re-  
10 quired by paragraph (1), the regional aquaculture  
11 coordinators described in section 101 may conduct  
12 consultations with the operator of each offshore  
13 aquaculture facility in the region concerned on a  
14 regular basis—

15 (A) to assess the status of the operator's  
16 business; and

17 (B) if appropriate, to identify available re-  
18 sources to support the operator, such as re-  
19 gional experts, university extension agents, and  
20 grant opportunities.

21 (g) CAPITAL MARKETS.—

22 (1) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—In order to  
23 enhance access to capital markets, the Administrator  
24 shall provide financial institutions and investment  
25 firms with objective, science-based information on



1 offshore aquaculture and the Federal regulatory re-  
2 gime for offshore aquaculture.

3 (2) ECONOMIC ANALYSIS.—The Administrator  
4 shall provide economic analysis to answer queries re-  
5 garding the value of offshore aquaculture assets to  
6 secure financing, such as equipment, governmental  
7 permits, inventory, and intellectual property.

8 (3) COLLABORATION.—In order to achieve the  
9 goals of this subsection, the Administrator is encour-  
10 aged to collaborate with the Secretary of Agri-  
11 culture, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the re-  
12 gional networks established under subsection (d).

13 **SEC. 302. AQUACULTURE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.**

14 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

15 (1) COVERED INSTITUTION.—The term “cov-  
16 ered institution” means—

17 (A) a minority-serving institution;

18 (B) a Native Hawaiian-serving institution;

19 (C) an Alaska Native-serving institution;

20 (D) a historically Black college or univer-  
21 sity; or

22 (E) a Tribal college or university.

23 (2) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE OR UNI-  
24 VERSITY.—The term “historically Black college or  
25 university” has the meaning given the term “part B

1 institution” in section 322 of the Higher Education  
2 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061).

3 (3) MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION.—The  
4 term “minority-serving institution” means an eligi-  
5 ble institution described in paragraph (2), (4), (5),  
6 (6), or (7) of section 371(a) of the Higher Edu-  
7 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a)).

8 (4) TRIBAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.—The  
9 term “Tribal college or university” means a Tribal  
10 College or University (as defined in section 316(b)  
11 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
12 1059c(b)) that is chartered by the governing body of  
13 the applicable Indian Tribe or by the Federal Gov-  
14 ernment.

15 (b) AQUACULTURE CURRICULUM GRANTS.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after  
17 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Adminis-  
18 trator, in consultation with private sector aqua-  
19 culture stakeholders, academic institutions, and the  
20 national sea grant college program, shall establish a  
21 program to award grants to covered institutions to  
22 assist in establishing or enhancing an aquaculture  
23 curriculum for undergraduate, graduate, or certifi-  
24 cate courses of study at such covered institutions.

(2) AQUACULTURE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.—A covered institution that receives a grant under this section shall be known as an “Aquaculture Center of Excellence”.

(3) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this section, a covered institution shall submit to the Administrator an application that includes any plans to partner with one or more other institutions of higher education as authorized under paragraph (5).

11 (4) USE OF GRANT AMOUNTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—A covered institution receiving a grant under this section shall use the grant amounts to establish or enhance an aquaculture curriculum for undergraduate, graduate, or certificate courses of study that may include the following:

(i) Training in various skills needed by successful aquaculture entrepreneurs, including—

21 (I) offshore aquaculture oper-  
22 ations;

(II) business management, strategic planning, business plan development, capital financing and fund-

1 raising, financial management and ac-  
2 counting, market analysis and com-  
3 petitive analysis, and market entry  
4 and strategy execution; and

5 (III) any other skill specific to  
6 the needs of the student population  
7 and the surrounding community, in-  
8 cluding with respect to social and en-  
9 vironmental sustainability, as deter-  
10 mined by the covered institution.

11 (ii) Natural and social science re-  
12 search programs in aquaculture and nat-  
13 ural fisheries, including offshore aqua-  
14 culture.

15 (iii) Development of extension pro-  
16 grams (or cooperation with existing exten-  
17 sion programs) that—

18 (I) educate and engage commu-  
19 nity members, including elementary  
20 and secondary school students, on  
21 aquaculture and aquaculture career  
22 pathways; and

23 (II) transfer newly developed  
24 techniques and research information  
25 developed or collated at the covered

1 institution to aquaculture stake-  
2 holders.

3 (iv) Career development, such as the  
4 establishment of cooperatives, apprentice-  
5 ships, internships, practicums,  
6 mentorships, accelerators, or grant com-  
7 petitions.

8 (B) LIMITATIONS ON USE OF GRANT  
9 AMOUNTS.—Amounts from a grant awarded  
10 under this section may be used only for ex-  
11 penses directly related to the implementation of  
12 the curriculum or activities authorized under  
13 this section.

14 (5) PARTNERSHIPS.—In applying for grants  
15 and carrying out activities with grant amounts  
16 under this section, a covered institution may partner  
17 with one or more other institutions of higher edu-  
18 cation with established aquaculture programs, in-  
19 cluding institutions of higher education not other-  
20 wise eligible for grants under this section, to facili-  
21 tate the sharing of resources and knowledge nec-  
22 essary for the development or enhancement of aqua-  
23 culture curriculum at the covered institution.

24 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
25 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section

1 \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030,  
2 to remain available until expended.

3 **SEC. 303. WORKING WATERFRONTS PRESERVATION GRANT**  
4 **PROGRAM.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce, act-  
6 ing through the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Eco-  
7 nomic Development (referred to in this section as the  
8 “Secretary”), shall award grants, on a competitive basis,  
9 that support the commercial fishing industry, the aqua-  
10 culture industry, the for-hire recreational fishing industry,  
11 or the boatbuilding industry in coastal States.

12 (b) APPLICATION.—An entity desiring a grant under  
13 this section shall submit to the Secretary an application  
14 containing such information as the Secretary may reason-  
15 ably require.

16 (c) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting entities to receive  
17 a grant under this section, the Secretary shall give sub-  
18 stantial weight to—

19 (1) the economic significance of a project to the  
20 commercial fishing industry, the aquaculture indus-  
21 try, the for-hire recreational fishing industry, or the  
22 boatbuilding industry in the immediate vicinity and  
23 in the coastal State in which the project is located;

24 (2) the availability of waterfront access points  
25 for the commercial fishing industry, the aquaculture

1 industry, the for-hire recreational fishing industry,  
2 or the boatbuilding industry within the community  
3 in which the entity seeks to carry out the project;

4 (3) the utility of the project for use in the com-  
5 mercial fishing industry, the aquaculture industry,  
6 the for-hire recreational fishing industry, or the  
7 boatbuilding industry with respect to the natural  
8 characteristics and developed infrastructure of the  
9 community in which the project will be located;

10 (4) whether the entity has a business plan for  
11 the project;

12 (5) anticipated or likely impacts of the project  
13 on existing uses, including commercial fishing, aqua-  
14 culture, offshore aquaculture, for-hire recreational  
15 fishing, or boatbuilding;

16 (6) the ability of the entity to demonstrate a  
17 need, or support, for the project within that commu-  
18 nity; and

19 (7) if the project will confer property protection  
20 benefits, and the duration of those benefits.

21 (d) COST-SHARING.—A grant under this section for  
22 a project may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of  
23 the project.

24 (e) IMPROVED OR PROTECTED PROPERTY.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—A grant under this section  
2           may be used to improve or protect privately-owned  
3           real property or interests in privately-owned real  
4           property, including easements, only from willing  
5           owners.

6           (2) NO EXERCISE OF EMINENT DOMAIN.—No  
7           Federal, State, or local agency may exercise the  
8           power of eminent domain to secure title to any real  
9           property or facilities in connection with a project  
10          carried out with a grant under this section.

11          (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
12          authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
13          \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030.

14      **SEC. 304. OUTREACH ON SUSTAINABLE OFFSHORE AQUA-**  
15                                      **CULTURE.**

16          (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall conduct  
17          outreach on sustainable offshore aquaculture to promote  
18          understanding, science-based decision making, and com-  
19          mercial adoption.

20          (b) ENGAGEMENT.—In carrying out subsection (a),  
21          the Administrator shall use appropriate means to en-  
22          gage—

- 23                  (1) the general public;
- 24                  (2) community leaders;
- 25                  (3) governmental officials;



- 1 (4) the business community;  
2 (5) the academic community; and  
3 (6) the nonprofit sector.

## 4 **TITLE IV—STUDIES AND** 5 **REPORTS**

### 6 **SEC. 401. STUDY ON OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE BY OCEAN** 7 **STUDIES BOARD OF THE NATIONAL ACAD-** 8 **EMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND** 9 **MEDICINE.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall seek to  
11 enter into a contract with the Ocean Studies Board of the  
12 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medi-  
13 cine (in this section referred to as the “Board”) under  
14 which the Board shall, not later than 5 years after the  
15 date on which the Administrator establishes the assess-  
16 ment program under section 201—

17 (1) complete a study to develop the scientific  
18 basis for efficient and effective regulation of offshore  
19 aquaculture; and

20 (2) submit to Congress and make publicly avail-  
21 able the results of the study.

22 (b) ELEMENTS.—The study completed pursuant to  
23 subsection (a) shall, with respect to offshore aqua-  
24 culture—

25 (1) identify—

1 (A) optimal methods of operation of off-  
2 shore aquaculture facilities to limit adverse ef-  
3 fects on the environment, wildlife, and human  
4 well-being, including—

5 (i) considerations to guide siting deci-  
6 sions of such facilities;

7 (ii) appropriate stocking densities; and

8 (iii) opportunities for selective breed-  
9 ing;

10 (B) a science-based definition of “respon-  
11 sible offshore aquaculture feed or other inputs”,  
12 including guidance on sourcing feed or other in-  
13 puts to address long- or short-term concerns,  
14 including the availability and scalability of such  
15 inputs;

16 (C) potential adverse effects on the envi-  
17 ronment, wildlife, and human well-being, includ-  
18 ing from—

19 (i) the use of antibiotics and other  
20 pharmaceuticals by offshore aquaculture  
21 facilities, including through analyses nec-  
22 essary to establish acceptable rates, impact  
23 levels, and risk thresholds, such as anal-  
24 yses of organism antibiotic consumption or

- 1                   metabolization versus excretion to the sur-  
2                   rounding environment;
- 3                   (ii) assimilation of pollution origi-  
4                   nating from offshore aquaculture facilities  
5                   on marine organisms;
- 6                   (iii) abandoned, lost, damaged or oth-  
7                   erwise discarded equipment;
- 8                   (iv) harmful interactions with wildlife;
- 9                   (v) interbreeding between cultured  
10                  species and native marine species;
- 11                  (vi) the spread of disease from cul-  
12                  tured species to wild species;
- 13                  (vii) the collection and removal of  
14                  brood stock for offshore aquaculture oper-  
15                  ations, and hatcheries and prestocking  
16                  rearing operations that are specific to off-  
17                  shore aquaculture;
- 18                  (viii) large-scale cultivation of filter-  
19                  feed bivalve organisms and seaweed;
- 20                  (ix) offshore aquaculture facilities act-  
21                  ing as aggregating devices and increasing  
22                  the vulnerability of wild fisheries and wild-  
23                  life populations to fishing or other sources  
24                  of mortality;

1 (x) predator control devices and meth-  
2 ods; and

3 (xi) the use of non-sustainable sources  
4 of feed or other inputs, including the use  
5 of globally limited marine resources for  
6 feed ingredients, and scalability of alter-  
7 natives, including—

8 (I) novel ingredients (for exam-  
9 ple, insect, single cell protein, and  
10 algae);

11 (II) traditional ingredients (for  
12 example, soya); and

13 (III) other inputs;

14 (D) potential methods and technologies to  
15 mitigate adverse effects, including the effects  
16 identified under subparagraph (C);

17 (E) potential conflicts between offshore  
18 aquaculture facilities and other users of the off-  
19 shore environment, and solutions to mitigate  
20 such conflicts;

21 (F) the types of data and qualitative infor-  
22 mation necessary for the optimal operation of  
23 offshore aquaculture facilities and appropriate  
24 methods of procuring such data and informa-  
25 tion, including from—

1 (i) citizen science (as defined in sec-  
2 tion 402(c) of the Crowdsourcing and Cit-  
3 izen Science Act (15 U.S.C. 3724(c))); and

4 (ii) the traditional knowledge of Trib-  
5 al and Indigenous communities; and

6 (G) best practices for offshore aquaculture  
7 siting and operations to manage and plan for  
8 predicted changes in global atmospheric and  
9 oceanographic conditions; and

10 (2) provide recommendations for legislative or  
11 administrative action with respect to—

12 (A) methods of operation identified under  
13 paragraph (1)(A);

14 (B) mitigating adverse effects identified  
15 under paragraph (1)(C);

16 (C) environmental standards, control rules,  
17 or reference points that build on the existing  
18 public and private standards for the sustain-  
19 ability of offshore aquaculture; and

20 (D) ensuring that operators of offshore  
21 aquaculture facilities adhere to international  
22 standards for social responsibility, public  
23 health, and equitable labor practices, including  
24 with respect to sourcing inputs for such facili-  
25 ties.

1   **SEC. 402. REPORT ON OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE BY GOV-**  
2                   **ERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE.**

3           (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 5 years after the  
4   date on which the Administrator establishes the assess-  
5   ment program under section 201, the Comptroller General  
6   of the United States shall submit to the appropriate com-  
7   mittees of Congress a report examining the permitting,  
8   monitoring, and regulation of offshore aquaculture during  
9   the 15-year period ending on such date of establishment.

10          (b) BASES OF REPORT.—The Comptroller General  
11   shall base the report required by subsection (a) on avail-  
12   able literature, case studies, and aquaculture stakeholder  
13   input.

14          (c) ELEMENTS OF REPORT.—The report required by  
15   subsection (a) shall—

16               (1) assess the feasibility and potential positive  
17               and negative implications of designating a lead agen-  
18               cy to issue permits for offshore aquaculture oper-  
19               ations in a timely manner;

20               (2) identify lessons learned during the period  
21               described in subsection (a) with respect to—

22                       (A) the effect of offshore aquaculture type,  
23                       location, and regulatory framework on the suc-  
24                       cess of offshore aquaculture projects;

25                       (B) the degree of involvement of coastal or  
26                       adjacent States or Tribal or Indigenous commu-

1 nities in consultations for, planning for, or op-  
2 erations of offshore aquaculture;

3 (C) safety protocols and risk mitigation  
4 measures for the permitting and oversight proc-  
5 esses for offshore aquaculture, including—

6 (i) escape prevention measures;

7 (ii) emergency event response plan-  
8 ning;

9 (iii) compliance monitoring, particu-  
10 larly in remote locations;

11 (iv) compliance with Federal laws;

12 (v) mechanisms for reporting to ap-  
13 propriate Federal authorities; and

14 (vi) vessel navigation aids to ensure  
15 navigational safety;

16 (D) the effect of incentives to reduce ad-  
17 verse effects or disparate impacts from offshore  
18 aquaculture operations;

19 (E) building and optimizing synergies be-  
20 tween offshore aquaculture and wild-caught  
21 fishing activities, or offshore, nearshore, and  
22 onshore aquaculture activities, including market  
23 development, increasing seafood consumption,  
24 and shared infrastructure;

1 (F) the environmental effects of offshore  
2 aquaculture operations, including mechanisms  
3 to prevent harm to the environment, wildlife, or  
4 human well-being;

5 (G) the net economic and social benefits of  
6 offshore aquaculture projects, particularly for  
7 nearby communities and fishery stakeholders,  
8 based on project size, regulatory structures, and  
9 financing structures;

10 (H) the impact of introducing offshore  
11 aquaculture products to the marketplace on  
12 supply and demand for wild-capture fisheries  
13 products, and methods for ensuring resiliency  
14 and growth for both offshore aquaculture and  
15 wild-capture fisheries products;

16 (I) mechanisms to enhance capital invest-  
17 ment, workforce development, and equitable op-  
18 portunity requirements or assistance programs  
19 in the permitting process for offshore aqua-  
20 culture, or to diversify permit applicants;

21 (J) outstanding needs for continued re-  
22 search, development, education activities, pro-  
23 grams, and funding regarding—

24 (i) offshore aquaculture projects; and



1 (ii) development of the domestic work-  
2 force and entrepreneurship related to off-  
3 shore aquaculture;

4 (K) the economic potential for both large-  
5 and small-scale offshore aquaculture operations  
6 to generate a positive return on investment  
7 under various regulatory and financing struc-  
8 tures;

9 (L) the applicability and sufficiency of ex-  
10 isting regulatory systems for offshore aqua-  
11 culture; and

12 (M) existing local, State, Federal, and for-  
13 eign regulatory standards that may serve as  
14 models for efficient and effective regulation of  
15 offshore aquaculture; and

16 (3) include such recommendations as the Comp-  
17 troller General may have with respect to future off-  
18 shore aquaculture operations, including with respect  
19 to—

20 (A) regulatory processes necessary for per-  
21 mitting, monitoring, and oversight, including  
22 processes and techniques related to siting, de-  
23 ployment, operations, and decommissioning;

24 (B) potential safeguards, data collection,  
25 or monitoring required to minimize disparate

1 impacts on specially affected coastal jurisdic-  
2 tions (as defined in section 202(e)), fishery  
3 stakeholders, local economies, marine environ-  
4 ments, and existing domestic economic sectors;

5 (C) mechanisms for optimizing coordina-  
6 tion among Federal agencies with a role in per-  
7 mitting or supporting offshore aquaculture  
8 without compromising the goals of such permit-  
9 ting;

10 (D) methods for effectively involving aqua-  
11 culture stakeholders, including—

12 (i) specially affected coastal jurisdic-  
13 tions (as defined in section 202(e));

14 (ii) local communities;

15 (iii) regional offshore waters users  
16 and management groups, including re-  
17 gional fishery management councils; and

18 (iv) users of local, State, Tribal, and  
19 Federal waters and coastal resources;

20 (E) best practices for incorporating local  
21 knowledge, including from Tribal or Indigenous  
22 communities;

23 (F) capabilities of Federal agencies that  
24 are necessary for effective regulation of the off-  
25 shore aquaculture sector; and

1                   (G) how creating private rights of action or  
2                   waiving sovereign immunity would affect the de-  
3                   velopment of offshore aquaculture projects and  
4                   the acceptance of such projects by nearshore  
5                   and offshore waters user groups and coastal  
6                   communities.