



Jared Golden
Congress of the United States
2nd District of Maine

October 9, 2025

The Honorable Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

RE: Request for Public Comments and Notice of Public Hearing Relating to the Operation of the Agreement between the United States of America, the United Mexican States, and Canada

Dear Ambassador Greer:

The Office of Congressman Jared Golden (ME-02) submits the following public comment on behalf of various constituents in the Maine lobster industry: Virginia Olsen, the political director of the Maine Lobstering Union, and Dustin Delano, Chief Strategist of Policy and Operations for the New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association (NEFSA). These leaders in the Maine lobstering community view the potential renewal of the United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA) as an appropriate venue to implement co-management fisheries practices with Canada around the Gray Zone, a 277 square mile maritime area in the Bay of Fundy over which both the United States and Canada claim sovereignty. Doing so would strengthen the economic well being of American fishermen by both preserving the sustainability of integral Gulf of Maine fish stocks, while also ensuring that they are not at a competitive disadvantage compared to their Canadian counterparts.

The Gray Zone has been claimed by both the United States and Canada since the Revolutionary War. For centuries, the lobstermen and fishermen of Downeast Maine have relied on this marine area to harvest lobster, scallops, and halibut, often competing with the Canadians who utilize these same fishing grounds. Frustratingly, while the long-term viability of these stocks are essential to the economic success of both American and Canadian harvesters, it is our fishermen and lobstermen who are required to adhere to the highest standards of conservation. Maine lobstermen abide by a maximum size limit for harvesting lobster and Halibut; Canadian lobstermen do not. Maine lobstermen mark the tails of egg-bearing females with a v-notch and toss them back so they can spawn; Canadian lobstermen do not. Maine fishermen use less durable gear with weak links to reduce lethal entanglements with endangered North Atlantic right whales; Canadian lobstermen do not.

Past attempts to resolve this territorial dispute to support the competitiveness of U.S. fishermen have been ineffective. A 2023 U.S. Department of State Report written for Congress titled “*Progress Toward an Agreement with Canadian Officials Addressing Territorial Disputes and Collecting Fisheries Management Measures in the Gulf of Maine*” incorrectly states:

“The status quo benefits the United States by keeping the Gray Zone aligned with the more favorable measures applicable to the broader U.S. lobster management area within which it sits. Current cooperation has proved effective in managing the area. Negotiations to resolve the dispute would require significant dedicated resources. In the absence of a resolution of the territorial dispute, an agreement to resolve differing fisheries management measures in the Gray Zone could impact U.S. claims to sovereignty by creating regulations that differ from those applicable to the broader Gulf of Maine jurisdiction in which the Gray Zone lies.”

In reality, as management currently exists, there is no cooperation in managing this area. This report – and past U.S. federal government assessments of the Gray Zone – are misleading, and the fishermen I represent have told me repeatedly that the current regulatory framework in the area does not benefit American fishermen; it hurts them.

The implementation of a co-management practice in a renewed USMCA would address this harmful, unfair regulatory disparity. That is why the renewal of the USMCA provides a reasonable forum to discuss and potentially implement a co-management agreement, which should include Canadian and American fishermen working together to determine and follow the same regulations.

The United States government should do everything in its power to ensure that our fishermen are not at a competitive disadvantage and deprived of economic opportunity. Maine’s seafood harvesters have been awaiting a resolution to the Gray Zone for too long and at great consequence to their safety, their businesses, and the natural resources they depend on.

These constituents are prepared to provide testimony at the International Trade Commission on November 17th on the merits of a co-management practice in a renewed USMCA agreement.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.