

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 6, 2011

Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

I write to you today to express my concern regarding the decision by NOAA to consider a proposal to list bluefin tuna under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The United States has a long record of leading the world in sustainable management of Atlantic bluefin tuna and other highly migratory species. It is very important when setting regulations for these internationally managed species we implement policies that do not cause disproportionate harm to our fishermen and the communities that rely on them.

The New England bluefin tuna fishery is culturally and economically important to the region, with 2008 landings valued at \$5.2 million. This fishery supports countless businesses and communities and its loss would be devastating, especially in hard economic times. The loss of this fishery would be particularly painful given that our fishermen have been patiently playing by all the rules set by the international community and NOAA.

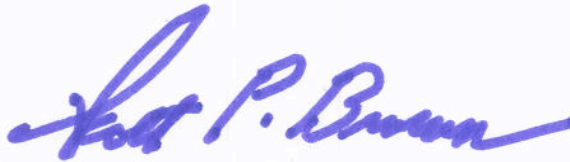
In 2010, this Administration supported a listing of bluefin tuna under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) that would have severely undermined our fishermen despite opposition from a large, bipartisan group of members of Congress. Now the Administration is currently considering a proposal to list bluefin tuna under the ESA. A decision to list bluefin under the ESA would serve to punish U.S. fishermen, would reduce this country's leverage at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), and may also have a negative impact on the conservation status of this resource.

An ESA listing would effectively ban bluefin fishing in our country and lead us to forgo any future opportunities to fight for quota and fishing opportunities for our fishermen at ICCAT. Furthermore, ICCAT management is improving, as evidenced by large quota reductions and improved compliance seen in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean fisheries in 2009 and 2010. The U.S. has contributed greatly to these and other positive changes at ICCAT and the resulting improvements in the health of the ICCAT-managed species. Continuing to work with ICCAT is the best way for the U.S. to continue to improve the status of bluefin, not by taking a unilateral action that will hamstring our ability to encourage other nations to adopt conservation measures.

If the species is listed under ESA, the U.S. share of the western quota will simply be reallocated to other nations. Given that the U.S. has by far the strictest environmental standards in the world for this species, it would not be prudent to transfer our effort to other nations, thereby harming the domestic economy while simultaneously rewarding the less conservation-minded behavior of other ICCAT nations.

The current stock assessment presented in September of 2010 indicates that bluefin tuna populations are improving, not declining. Management is also improving in other nations, making it likely that the increases will be even more significant in the coming years. Bluefin is a highly migratory species that is managed internationally; the U.S. should not try to act alone. ICCAT is the proper arena to continue to rebuild this species. An ESA listing will almost certainly hurt U.S. fishermen and the communities that depend on the industry. Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott P. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott P. Brown
United States Senator