

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Eric Schwaab
NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East –West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 2091

Dear Assistant Administrator Schwaab:

I write in regards to National Marine Fisheries Service's status review of the Atlantic bluefin tuna to determine if petitioned action is warranted to list Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Specifically, I am concerned that a decision to list this highly migratory species under the ESA will significantly disadvantage U.S. fishermen, reduce the United States leverage at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), and undermine ongoing efforts to conserve and protect this resource at the international level.

The United States has a long record as the world's leader in sustainable management of Atlantic bluefin tuna and other highly migratory species. And for years, Massachusetts fishermen have played by the rules while other countries have taken significantly more than their fair share impeding global conservation efforts. Listing the bluefin tuna under the ESA will not change that situation. However, it would disproportionately harm U.S. fishermen and the communities they support.

Additionally, ICCAT management of this species is improving, as evidenced by the quota reductions and improved compliance seen in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna fisheries in 2009 and 2010. The United States has greatly contributed to these and other positive changes resulting in improvements in the health of ICCAT-managed species. However, I understand that an ESA listing could impede efforts by the United States to secure future bluefin quotas and related opportunities at ICCAT. Therefore, continuing to work under ICCAT is the preferred approach for improving the status of bluefin tuna, rather than unilateral action that can undermine our ability to encourage other nations to adopt conservation measures.

Lastly, it is unclear if any domestic protections conferred by the ESA will actually contribute to the global conservation of Atlantic bluefin tuna. It is my understanding that if the species is listed under the ESA and our quota is thereby reduced; the United States share of the western quota could be reallocated to other nations at ICCAT. Given that we have some of the strongest conservation regulations in the world for this species, transferring our effort to other nations may have a perverse effect of not only harming our domestic economy, but also making the international conservation effort more difficult.

The Honorable Eric Schwaab

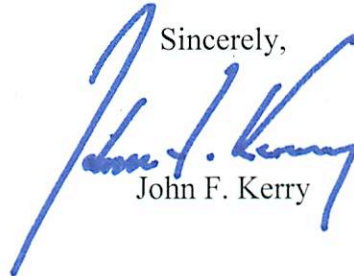
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It is critical that when we set regulations to achieve our shared goal of sustainably managing and harvesting this internationally fishery, we implement policies that do not cause disproportionate harm to our fishermen, the fish, and the communities they support.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John F. Kerry". The signature is stylized and written over the printed name.

John F. Kerry