



1518 K Street, NW, Suite 303  
Washington, D.C. 20005

June 29, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

According to recent reports in the Washington Post, your Department sent a confidential memo to the White House urging a rescission of former President Trump's Proclamation 10049 from June 5, 2020, which reopened the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument to commercial fishing.

As companies that take part in fishing off the waters of New England and the Mid-Atlantic, we would like to take this opportunity to share some of our concerns.

Through the years, we have made it clear that the management decisions that affect our livelihoods should be made through democratic, science-driven processes that encourage stakeholder engagement. We were therefore encouraged by the Executive Order President Biden signed on Inauguration Day stating it is "the policy of my Administration to listen to the science..."

The fishing industry cares deeply about protecting the marine ecosystems that provide for and sustain fishing families, but there is a right way and a wrong way to do it. Management decisions through the Highly Migratory Species Division of NOAA adhering to the international obligations created by the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Act already require compliance with a wide range of substantive legal requirements, including the Administrative Procedure Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Unfunded Mandates Act.

The Council process allows for stakeholders, scientists, and concerned citizens to review and debate policy decisions in a transparent manner. In contrast, the Antiquities Act authorizes the President to take away public areas and public resources with no public input. Using executive authority, the President can close any federal lands and waters in an opaque, top-down process that too often excludes the very people who would be most affected. It is important to note that every single fishery management council and NOAA oppose regulating fisheries in this manner.

We understand the Biden-Harris Administration position that former President Trump illegally subverted former President Obama's authority under the Antiquities Act to declare the marine monument. However, in light of the hardship that harvesters of swordfish, tuna, and squid will face, in addition to potential harm to lobster and crab producers when the original seven-year moratorium runs out, we ask that the damage

done to our industry due to COVID-19 and the subsequent government-mandated closure of restaurants, be considered in any recommendations to the White House.

Also keep in mind the seafood harvesters who don't necessarily fish in the monument area, such as scallopers — the nation's most valuable Federally-managed fishery — who will be negatively affected when those displaced by the ban move to their areas to fish.

We ask that if you advise a rescission of last year's proclamation, that you recommend a three-year moratorium before the commercial fishing ban is re-imposed. This will provide an opportunity for the hard-working men and women in our seaports to recoup some of the losses these fishing families endured due to COVID-19 related closures. And, in keeping with President Biden's January 20, 2021 Executive Order on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis, which stated that "the Federal Government must be guided by the best science and be protected by processes that ensure the integrity of Federal decision-making", this would allow our industry some time to commission a scientific review of commercial and recreational fishing, and its impact on the area of the monument, which to date has not been done.

A three-year moratorium on the re-imposition of the commercial fishing ban allows the Biden-Harris Administration to rescind the Trump Administration action, as well as allowing our industry to re-coup our losses suffered during COVID-19.

In the past few years, we had the opportunity to meet directly your two immediate predecessors. Unfortunately, before you were confirmed by the Senate, representatives of our fisheries were only granted five-minutes each on a one-hour phone call with Interior staff to defend our livelihoods.

We respectfully request that you meet with us in-person before the White House considers any recommendation from the Department concerning the commercial fishing ban.

We look forward to speaking more about this with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

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