

May 29, 2012



Mr. Sam Rauch
Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20901



Dear Sam,

Thank you for participating in the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting held in Hawaii from April 30-May 2, 2012. The CCC considered international fisheries management issues in respect to: 1) leveling the playing field between US and foreign fisheries, and 2) supporting the development of underutilized US fisheries.



In regards to the first issue, the CCC acknowledged that NMFS is working on its second report to Congress on the certification (positive or negative) of nations with respect to equivalent measures to the US in relation to preventing IUU fishing, bycatch of protected living marine resources, or shark catches on the high seas. It is the CCC's understanding that in NMFS' first report to Congress, NMFS did not negatively certify any nation. However, this does not align with accepted understanding that many nations importing seafood into the US market are not playing by the same rules as US fisheries with respect to data collection and monitoring, safety at sea requirements, protected species mitigation, and other management measures. Therefore, the CCC recommended that NMFS enhance their activities to identify nations that do not implement equivalent measures which may level the playing field between US and foreign fisheries.



The CCC further recommended that NMFS work with the US fishing industry to develop underutilized fisheries, and noted that such a program is identified in Section 2(a)(7) and Section (2)(b)(6) of the MSA. Examples of underutilized fisheries provided at the CCC meeting include George's Bank haddock and pelagic tuna and billfish fisheries in the EEZ around the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. Promoting development of underutilized US fisheries would benefit target and non-target stocks and protected species through transferred effects, promote employment in coastal communities, and enhance local food security.



Thank you for considering these recommendations. The CCC looks forward to any progress NMFS may make on these issues at the next CCC meeting.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Manuel P. Duenas".

Manuel P. Duenas
Chairman





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