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New England Fishery Management Council

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John Pappalardo, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

January 4, 2010

Robert R. Gabel, Chief  
Division of Management Authority  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
4401 North Fairfax Avenue, Room 212  
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Mr. Gabel:

The New England Fishery Management Council has unanimously voted to strongly recommend that Atlantic bluefin tuna not be placed under Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) at this time, and that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service not pursue nor support such listing at the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties in March, 2010.

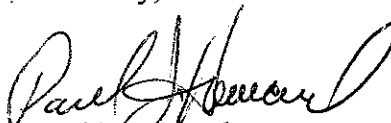
New England has an important economic interest and long historic participation in both commercial and recreational Atlantic bluefin tuna fisheries. Over the past few decades our fishers and supporting businesses have suffered through severe stock decline due to ICCAT mismanagement. A recovered bluefin tuna fishery would not only benefit our regional economy but would also help sustain the future for fishers who desperately need flexibility and increased options. The best way to achieve recovery of bluefin tuna stocks is through reform in ICCAT management. CITES is simply not the right tool for the job. Management reform at ICCAT actually began in 2008 with the *Report of the Independent Review of ICCAT*, followed by last year's very timely Monaco proposal. These spurs, along with effective U.S. input, led to a clear breakthrough in bluefin tuna management at the ICCAT annual meeting in November.

It is our belief that the proper U.S. course at this time should be to follow up the recent management reforms at next year's ICCAT meeting by ensuring that the following standards are met:

1. Atlantic bluefin tuna, both eastern and western stocks, be managed such that F/Fmsy is at all times equal to or less than one.
2. The U.S. quota share of Atlantic bluefin tuna be maintained at its current percentage level.
3. Atlantic bluefin tuna be managed according to SCRS recommendations to achieve stock rebuild by 2023.
4. Effective compliance with Atlantic bluefin tuna catch limits be assured.

Since management of Atlantic bluefin tuna is, in fact, the proper responsibility of ICCAT, it is the position of the New England Fishery Management Council that Appendix 1 listing under CITES for Atlantic bluefin tuna should not be pursued at this time, but held in abeyance against any future ICCAT footdragging.

Sincerely,

  
Paul J. Howard  
Executive Director