



Response to Huffington Post Julie Packard Op-ED

American bluefin tuna fishermen greatly appreciate the Packard Foundation's longstanding support for the electronic satellite tagging studies of the migration patterns of bluefin tuna by Dr. Barb Block (Professor Stanford University). Block's work off of North Carolina has revealed valuable knowledge of the complex extent of mixing of bluefin tuna born in the Mediterranean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. This knowledge has allowed the US and other countries and environmental groups to turn up the heat on the European Community and North African countries to begin to follow the scientific advice and rebuild the eastern stock.

But Ms. Packard is wrong to advocate a ban on international trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The international commission responsible for conserving bluefin tuna has already taken dramatic measures to rebuild this resource to maximum sustainable yield. The steps already taken include reducing the eastern catch from an estimated 61,000 metric tons (mt) to 19,700 mt in 2009, a further reduction to below 13,000 mt in 2010 and after a new stock assessment this Fall, an agreement already established will likely reduce catches to around 5,000 mt which will rebuild the resource by 2023.

In the western Atlantic catches have been reduced from 2,700 mt to 1,800 over the last several years. This catch level is sustainable, there is no overfishing off the US and our stock is scientifically projected to be rebuilt by 2017. US fishermen have always followed the scientific advice, are not responsible for the damage to the eastern stock and a listing under CITES would produce profound negative economic losses include lost jobs all along the East Coast.

There is no imminent threat to the resource; the latest stock assessment estimates a minimum of 5.2 million bluefin tuna free swimming from Argentina to Norway. The last thing this country and President Obama needs today is unnecessary los jobs and further coastal economy damage.

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