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January 29, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

The Honorable Gary Locke  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Salazar and Secretary Locke:

I am writing to request that the United States not support immediate listing of the northern bluefin tuna under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix I at the upcoming Fifteenth Conference of the Parties in March, 2010. We should give the new and stronger conservation measures of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) that was just approved in November, 2009 an opportunity to work before making a decision whether to support CITES listing for this species.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a rich and valued history with marine fisheries that goes back over 400 years. Today Massachusetts is home to one of the world's great fishing economies, and the Commonwealth's citizens are proud and protective of our ocean resources, including our traditional and exceptionally valuable fisheries for Atlantic bluefin tuna.

Annually, our residents purchase the bulk of federal permits (over 12,000) necessary to fish commercially for giant bluefin tuna and recreationally for smaller bluefins. Importantly, both species have been under conservation restrictions since 1974 when the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) first produced agreements to protect this internationally shared and highly migratory resource. Our marine officials and scientists have contributed substantially to improving knowledge and management of this complex fish stock which mixes freely with Atlantic bluefins originating from the Mediterranean Sea.



I am aware of the recent controversial proposal to place Atlantic bluefin under CITES, which would ban international trade in bluefin. Such a ban would devastate tens of thousands of fishermen and the industries that support our fisheries including boating, bait and tackle, marinas and other services. The Commonwealth is opposed to CITES listing at this time before the ICCAT conservation measures are given a chance to work. The Commonwealth has relayed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the scientific and policy justification for our concerns, including the fact that the three criteria for a listing for a commercially exploited species are not met and that, pursuant to the latest ICCAT agreement, there is a very high probability that the eastern stock will be higher than the 5 million population today and therefore not in jeopardy. The New England Fishery Management Council also opposes unanimously any U.S. support for an Atlantic bluefin tuna CITES listing. This recommendation was relayed to Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA Administrator, in a December 1, 2009 letter (enclosed).

I am writing to you directly to emphasize the critical importance of this bluefin CITES matter to the long term health and well being of the Commonwealth's coastal fishery economy. I have very high confidence that ICCAT, NOAA and our fishing communities will rise to the challenge of rebuilding our shared, valuable bluefin fisheries under the new ICCAT conservation agreements reached last November in Brazil.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Bowles', written in a cursive style.

Ian Bowles  
Secretary  
Energy and Environmental Affairs

Encl: January 4, 2010 MA DMF letter to US FWS  
December 1, 2009 NEFMC letter to NOAA

cc:  
Lubchenco, NOAA  
Balsiger, NMFS  
MA Congressional Delegation  
Commissioner of Fish and Game Mary Griffin  
Director of Marine Fisheries Paul Diodati