



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
THE DIRECTOR

Ms. Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director
Western Pacific Regional Fishery
Management Council
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, HI 96813

RECEIVED
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WEST PAC

Dear Ms. Simonds:

Thank you for your letter regarding amendments to the Billfish Conservation Act that would remove a current exemption that allows U.S. mainland sales of Pacific billfish landed by U.S. vessels in Hawaii and Pacific Insular Areas.

As you know, the United States carefully regulates domestic fisheries for billfish through the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Division. We also participate in international fishery management bodies that regulate billfish in the Atlantic and Pacific ocean areas.

I recognize that the Hawaii billfish fishery is small but important and, with the exception of striped marlin, the status of billfish stocks in the Pacific Islands Region is not overfished or subject to overfishing. Additionally, the commercial harvest of billfish in the Atlantic has been prohibited since 1988. I have full confidence in these existing management processes to sustainably manage billfish populations.

Current requirements for reporting domestic landings pursuant to federal fishery management plans, the Certification of Eligibility requirement and import screening through the government-wide International Trade Data System Program also provide robust documentation and tracking of billfish products.

The Administration has not taken a formal position on S. 396 but NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service has, and will continue to, inform Congress about the successful system currently in place to sustainably manage billfish populations. We look forward to continuing to work with you to address issues related to billfish management and trade.

Sincerely,

Chris Oliver



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THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES

