



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

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183rd CM

July 10, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross
Secretary of Commerce
US Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

At the 182nd Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council held June 22-25, 2020 via WebEx, the Council discussed fishery issues in the Western Pacific, including the impacts of foreign competition. The Council manages the largest US fishery that operates in international waters as US fisheries formulate the largest economic footprint in the Pacific Islands.

The Seafood Trade Task Force, for which you established per Presidential Executive Order on May 7, 2020, was created to develop a strategy that includes supporting "fair market access for United States seafood products". The Council requested that the Seafood Trade Task Force evaluate all impacts of foreign-sourced fishery products on domestic fisheries and markets. The evaluation should focus on foreign-sourced fishery products into Hawaii and Guam with known seafood safety concerns such as carbon-monoxide gassed tuna. The Task Force should consider the potential suspension of such products during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a matter of food security in potential crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, local US fisheries (such as the Hawaii longline tuna fishery) need to be in full operation to ensure the US market is supplied with ample safe seafood without economic impediment from foreign competition that may not be supplying the market with a beneficial and safe food source. The issue is even more critical for US Pacific Islands, such as Hawaii or Guam, where 'cheaper' tuna and tuna-like products are harvested by fisheries that do not meet typical US fishery standards and often preserve the product by gassing the product with carbon monoxide. This process creates an illusion of product freshness and can create deleterious health risks to the unsuspecting general public.

The Council also requested that the Seafood Trade Task Force include representatives of the Council Coordinating Committee (CCC) in its activities. The CCC will be meeting in September 2020 and consultation with the Seafood Trade Task Force would be appreciated. Moreover, attached to this letter is a list of other relevant matters that the Seafood Trade Task Force should consider. With your assistance, we can continue to ensure that we are able to "fish forever." Thank you for your attention to these matters and if you have any questions, please call me at (808) 522-8220.

Sincerely,

Taotasi Archie Soliai
Council Chairman

Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director

CC: Chris Oliver, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Fisheries
Robert Blair, Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, US Department of Commerce

Attachment: *Notable Needs for Seafood Trade Task Force*