

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

November 3, 2011

The Honorable Jane Lubchenco
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Room 5128
1401 Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C., DC 20230-0002

Dear Administrator Lubchenco,

In recent months, we have been greatly encouraged by NOAA's work to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The pledge that you and Commissioner Damanaki signed was an important step toward ensuring protections for our fishermen. We have taken a number of actions here in Congress to fight IUU fishing, and it is crucial that those efforts are mirrored on the international stage.

We were pleased that the 111th Congress passed legislation that prohibited shark finning by requiring that all sharks are landed with fins attached. In recent months, we have seen the banning of shark fins at the state level in California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington. Other countries have also taken up the shark conservation mantle with Mexico becoming the latest to announce plans to regulate shark fishing in its territorial waters.

These efforts are encouraging, and it is clear that momentum is building both against IUU fishing and for shark and ocean conservation. We know that the 22nd Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) will take place from November 11-19, in Istanbul, Turkey. To capitalize on the current momentum, and considering ICCAT is the inter-governmental fishery organization responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas, we ask that NOAA Fisheries raise the following as part of U.S. proposals and positions for this meeting:

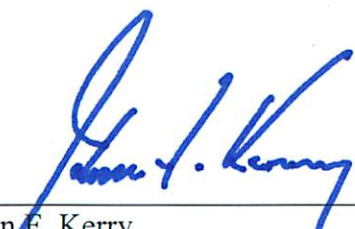
1. Propose a Fins-Naturally-Attached Measure: Since the 2010 ICCAT meeting, the U.S. has passed into law the Shark Conservation Act requiring sharks landed in the U.S. to be landed with their fins still naturally attached. We request that the U.S. once again propose a fins-naturally-attached measure at ICCAT and make a concerted effort, starting well in advance of the annual meeting, to bring co-sponsors to the proposal.
2. Prohibit Retention of Vulnerable Shark Species: The U.S. should make or support proposals to prohibit retention of vulnerable shark species including but not limited to porbeagle, silky and common thresher sharks.

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3. Establish Catch Limits for Blue Sharks: The U.S. should consider making or supporting a proposal to establish catch limits for blue sharks, which are currently unregulated at the international level.
4. Promote International Cooperation to Reduce IUU Fishing: Considering NOAA's recent pledge of bilateral cooperation with the European Union to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and deficiencies identified in the 2009 Report of the Independent Performance Review of ICCAT, the U.S. should work with other countries to reduce IUU at ICCAT. Efforts should include advancing a global fishing vessel registry, improving monitoring and enforcement capacity, ending unregulated shark fishing, and eliminating illegal drift gillnetting.

We appreciate the work that NOAA has already done in these areas and thank you for your consideration of our requests. We are dedicated to finding solutions to problems that affect our fishermen and our oceans and we look forward to working with you as we move forward.

Sincerely,



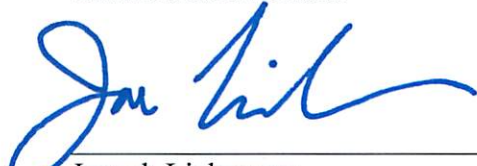
John F. Kerry
United States Senator




Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



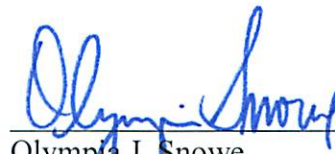
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Joseph Lieberman
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Barbara Boxer
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