

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 13, 2013

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dr. Kathryn Sullivan
Acting Administrator
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker and Acting Administrator Sullivan,

In a 2013 report to Congress, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) identified Mexico as ineffectively managing the bycatch of North Pacific loggerhead sea turtles in their fisheries. We would like to request an update on the status of NOAA's consultations with the Mexican government to address this escalating problem.

Over a two month period this year, at least 705 loggerhead sea turtles were stranded on beaches of the Baja Peninsula in Mexico as a result of becoming trapped in offshore fishing gear. This likely undercounts the total sea turtles lost, as scientists estimate as many as 2,000 die in this region each year. North Pacific loggerhead sea turtles are a highly migratory species: they begin their lives off the coast of Japan, migrate across the Pacific, and feed off the west coast of the United States and Mexico. As parties to the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, the United States and Mexico have committed to reduce sea turtle bycatch "to the greatest extent practicable." Currently, the primary threat to the turtles' survival is fishing gear off the coast of Mexico, and we are concerned that the increasing bycatch of these turtles is unsustainable and may hasten this endangered species' decline to extinction.

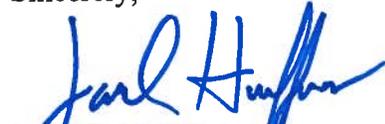
We understand that NOAA has been petitioned to use its authority under the High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act and the Pelly Amendment to pursue and sanction the Mexican government for failing to address this bycatch issue. We support NOAA's efforts and those of conservation organizations to address and elevate the status of this problem. NOAA identified Mexico and this bycatch problem earlier this year under the Moratorium Protection Act; however, the next required report to Congress will not come until January 2015. We are concerned that this lag may jeopardize the long-term survival and recovery of the North Pacific loggerhead population.

For this reason, we request an update on the status of consultations between the United States and Mexico on efforts to reduce the bycatch of North Pacific loggerhead sea turtles in Mexican

fishing operations. Specifically, we are interested in Mexico's response to NOAA's January 2013 report, including any official correspondence on the matter, what solutions are being considered by the parties, what negotiations have taken place thus far, and the outlook and timeline for resolution of this issue.

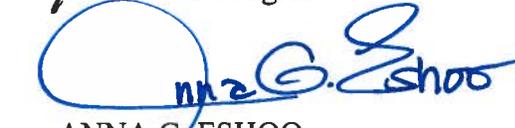
Thank you for your consideration and response to this letter. If you have any further questions, please contact Piper Crowell (piper.crowell@mail.house.gov; (202) 225-5161) in Congressman Jared Huffman's office.

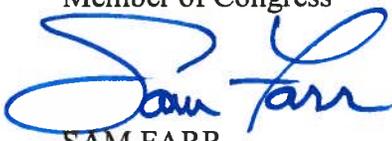
Sincerely,


JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress


MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress


LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress


ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress


SAM FARR
Member of Congress

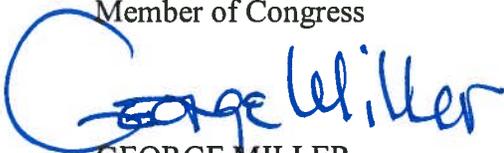

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