

December 1, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We would like to thank you once again for your continued leadership to protect our oceans. In order to cement your oceans legacy, we urge your Administration to finalize the Seafood Import Monitoring Program which will be essential to a comprehensive effort to address illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud. The 2014 Presidential Memorandum, "Establishing a Comprehensive Framework to Combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Seafood Fraud" recognized that "[IUU] fishing continues to undermine the economic and environmental sustainability of fisheries and fish stocks, both in the United States and around the world," and stated that "it is in the national interest of the United States to promote a framework that supports sustainable fishing practices and combats seafood fraud and the sale of IUU fishing products" by developing and implementing a traceability program "that can combat IUU fishing and seafood fraud."

The Task Force's proposed rule released on February 4, 2016, was a good first step in establishing "the first phase of a risk-based traceability program to track seafood from point of harvest to entry into U.S. commerce." However, as of the date of this correspondence, more than 10 months after the release of the proposed rule, NOAA has still not released a final rule establishing the traceability program. Whatever concerns that agencies may have and issues that still remain unresolved, 10 months later, need to be fixed in your Administration to finish this important work.

As you know, IUU fishing and seafood fraud pose a significant threat to the sustainability of fisheries resources, the health of marine ecosystems, the livelihoods and food security of coastal communities, and are often associated with other harmful illegal activities such as forced labor and trafficking of people, drugs, and weapons. Up to a third of the global catch is illegal and much of it is destined for lucrative markets such as the U.S. which does not currently have the tools necessary to prevent their entry. In the U.S., where more than 90% of the seafood Americans consume is imported, estimates indicate that up to \$2 billion worth of illegally caught seafood is imported annually. Additionally, of more than 25,000 seafood samples analyzed from 55 countries worldwide, 1 in 5 was mislabeled. It is clear that a strong, comprehensive and effective traceability rule which includes a timeline for expansion to all species and a clear timeline for implementation is needed now more than ever.

We urge you to finish the work your Administration started to fight seafood fraud and stop IUU fishing as soon as possible, and before the end of the Administration. The opportunity to ensure that all

seafood sold in the U.S, is safe, legally caught, and correctly labeled is now. The health of the oceans depends upon taking action.

We stand by ready to support your Administration in our shared commitment to ending seafood fraud and IUU fishing.

Sincerely,



Center for American Progress



Oceana



FishWise



World Wildlife Fund



Natural Resources Defense Council

cc:

The Honorable Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere,  
U.S. Department of Commerce

The Honorable Catherine Novelli, Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the  
Environment, U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Michael Froman, Ambassador, United States Trade Representative

Ms. Christina W. Goldfuss, Managing Director, Council on Environmental Quality

The Honorable Shaun Donovan, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Mr. Peter Koufopoulos, Director, Division of Seafood Safety, Food and Drug Administration