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WILLIAM M. THOMAS
DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

2206 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3521
(202) 225-2915



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

July 25, 2002

DISTRICT OFFICES:
4100 TRULSTON AVE #220
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93309
(805) 327-3611

319 WEST MURRAY AVENUE
VISALIA, CA 93287
(559) 627-6549

INTERNET:
www.house.gov/billthomas

Dr. William Hogarth
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration
1315 East West Highway SSM C3
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Hogarth:

I write with regard to a series of proposed rules concerning the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery.

As you know, limits on groundfishing were proposed in order to protect the endangered yelloweye rockfish. However, these proposed regulations will also have the unintended consequence of limiting or eliminating fishing for dogfish sharks. Dogfish sharks are one of the most popular specimens used by high school and college biology students for study. Limiting the Pacific catch would have a substantial impact on schools and students who rely on the availability of specimens as a major part of their biology curriculum. In the future, limiting the availability of specimens for study may eventually result in a reduction of American students who choose to pursue careers in the sciences.

I encourage the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to examine all of the consequences of these proposals, including the reduction in the availability of dogfish for scientific study, when formulating a final rule in the coming weeks. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Best regards,

WILLIAM M. THOMAS
Member of Congress

WMT/tpw