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August 25, 2016

Agenda Item G.1
Supplemental Attachment 9
September 2016

Mr. Herb Pollard
Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Dear Chairman Pollard,

I would like to request the Pacific Fishery Management Council consider a bill I authored, H.R.5797, the California Seamounts and Ridges National Marine Conservation Area Designation and Management Act, at the September meeting in Boise. I would appreciate receiving the comments from the Council, stakeholders, and advisory bodies after the bill is discussed.

In previous discussions with fisheries groups, the concern that conservation areas may increase pressures on fishing and restrict fishing has been expressed to me and to the California Seamounts Coalition. In the letters I have received expressing these concerns, there have been four main arguments made against the proposed conservation area:

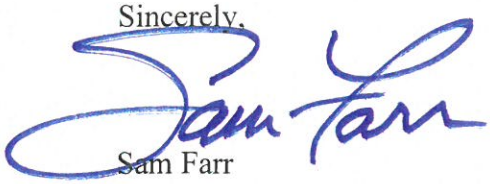
1) Cortes and Tanner banks have too much active fishing to be included in any fishing closures
2) Mendocino Ridge has too much fishing (mainly Albacore) to be included in fishing closures
3) The Albacore fishery is sustainable and should not be closed anywhere – it is also a lucrative fishery that matters more than others due to its economic impact, and
4) There must be consultation with PFMC and fisheries groups before any protection is implemented.

Although studies have shown that less than 0.1% of landings occur at the seamounts and ridges included in my legislation, I thought their concerns were valid and the final language of H.R.5797 directly addresses these points in the following ways:

1) Removed Cortes Tanner from the proposal for any fishing closures or limitations. It will have zero fisheries impacts, closures or limitations
2) Removed the inner half of Mendocino Ridge (the section where the vast majority of fishing takes place) from the bill. It will have zero fisheries, impacts or closures
3) Exempted the entire Albacore fishery from the proposal everywhere, and
4) Requires that before any protections are implemented, there will be an exhaustive formal consultation process that must include PFMC, key fishing organizations, tribes, etc.

I believe the bill balances the interests of fisheries, coastal tribes, and the Navy, while protecting marine life and diversity in Federal waters. I look forward to being briefed on the results of the PFMC discussion of H.R.5797 and to working with the PFMC as the bill moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Sam Farr
Member of Congress

cc: Chuck Tracy, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council