

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 27, 2017

Chris Oliver  
Assistant Administrator of Fisheries  
NOAA Fisheries Directorate  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Administrator Oliver,

We are writing to express our concern over the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) continued delays with the implementation of the midwater recreational ("long-leader") fishery year-round regulations for Oregon, which would allow our fishermen a more selective method of fishing for midwater rockfish, avoiding impacts on other constraining species.

It is our understanding that at the March 2016 Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) meeting, the Council agreed to a set of regulations to allow this fishery for recreational and charter fishermen outside of 40 fathoms during the summer months (April-September), when federal regulations restrict bottomfish activity to inside of 40 fathoms. Long-leader gear is designed to allow for the selective fishing of midwater rockfish by reducing the likelihood of catching constraining yelloweye rockfish and other bottom-loving species.

The 2017 recreational and charter bottomfish fishery was a very productive and successful one. For a variety of reasons, this success led to higher than anticipated catch during a season when the quota for our most important recreational species, black rockfish, had been reduced by 10 percent when compared to the previous season. The Oregon recreational fishery fully attained quota for 4 species and species groups, including yelloweye rockfish, by mid-September. Had the long-leader fishery been legalized in time for the 2017 season, as originally promised by NMFS, fisheries managers would have had an additional tool to handle these circumstances, possibly avoid the closure entirely, and at least keep fishermen on the water for a longer season.

These regulations were fully vetted over years of concept development, PFMC evaluation of experimental fishing permit results, and finally approved by the PFMC and NMFS in March of 2016. Now, after multiple subsequent delays, which have directly resulted in hardships for West Coast fishermen, we understand that the final regulations are in danger of delay beyond January 1, 2018. Until these regulations are finalized, Oregon is threatened with more likely future in-season actions, and small businesses will continue to face uncertainty that is detrimental to their bottom line. Our fishermen have made many sacrifices to implement the catch share program, and they work in good faith with NMFS with the understanding that these fisheries will be managed in an

effective, timely manner. These regulations are a high priority for us and our constituents, and we ask that you finalize these long-leader gear regulations by January 1, 2018 in order to provide our fishermen the time and certainty they need to prepare their businesses for the upcoming season.

Sincerely,



KURT SCHRADER  
Member of Congress



RON WYDEN  
U.S. Senator



PETER DeFAZIO  
Member of Congress



JEFFREY MERKLEY  
U.S. Senator



EARL BLUMENAUER  
Member of Congress



SUZANNE BONAMICI  
Member of Congress

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Cc: Barry Thom, NMFS West Coast Regional Administrator