

June 8, 2012

Chairman Dan Wolford  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97220

Dear Chairman Wolford and Council Members:

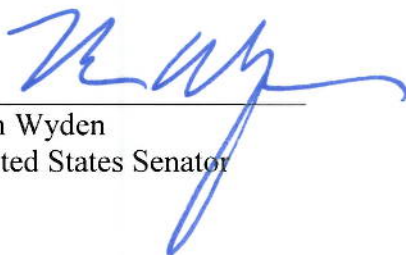
We are encouraged the Pacific Fishery Management Council will consider the next step in protecting currently unfished forage species at this month's meeting. By starting the process, the Council continues to show the visionary leadership we will need to keep fisheries a vital economic engine for our state and other coastal states. We ask that you continue to ensure the Council hears from all constituencies as it begins the process of defining how best to protect a vibrant Pacific marine ecosystem.

The Council is to be commended for taking a proactive approach in recognizing the ecosystem contribution of forage species, which transfer energy from primary producers like phytoplankton and zooplankton to marine life higher on the food chain. Predators that depend on an abundance of forage fish include albacore tuna, salmon and groundfish, which, in turn support high-value fisheries that are so important to our coastal economies.

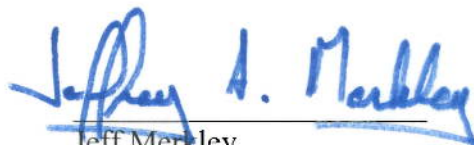
A new report from the Lenfest Forage Fish Task Force found that it is more economically valuable to leave forage fish in the water than to harvest them due to the reliance of commercially valuable species such as salmon, tuna and cod on forage fish. The report further recommends caution before initiating new fisheries on forage species given the limited knowledge currently available on these species. While the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the primary law governing our nation's fishery resources, encourages the domestic development of fisheries, we note that it also provides flexibility for regional councils to act with precaution, especially when it comes to sustaining existing fisheries over the long term and maintaining ecosystem health.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to a healthy and durable Pacific marine environment for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator