



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

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340-774-0001

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James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Acting Assistant Administrator of Fisheries
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Balsiger:

I am writing to you in support of concerns expressed by U.S. Virgin Islands' fishermen to you in several prior letters, as well in a communication by our Delegate to Congress Donna Christiansen. I attended the March 2009 meeting of the Caribbean Fishery Management Council ("CFMC") in St. Croix, and I expressed my position that the local fishing industry represents an integral part of the U.S. Virgin Islands' economy, as well as a major element of the Virgin Islands cultural heritage and that their concerns must be given serious consideration prior to any final policy directives being implemented.

Territorial fishermen have repeatedly expressed their frustrations that the National Marine Fisheries Service ("NMFS") appears to be ignoring their input and proposals in their efforts to develop modalities for compliance with the requirements of the Magnusan-Stevens Reauthorization Act. In the hopes that I might be able to support them in achieving an equitable result, I directed the St. Thomas Fishermen's Association to prepare a presentation of their recommendations for meeting those requirements without unduly constraining our local industry. This presentation was reviewed and approved by my Administration and, therefore represents the position of the Government of the Virgin Islands ("Government") on how best to achieve the required results.

At the March meeting, Dr. Roy Crabtree, Regional Director, presented a "Scoping Document" as the preferred path undertaken by the CFMC in regards to management of CFMC resources. In reviewing said document, we found no indication that any aspect of the Virgin Islands' approach had been either considered or included. In my remarks at the CFMC meeting, I emphasized that successful management of Territorial resources can only come about through

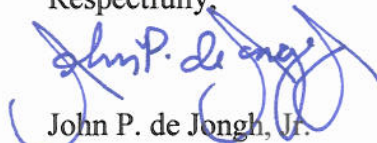
collaboration and cooperation between Federal and Territorial management interests. It will not occur if Federal priorities in setting management measures meet required deadlines but end in confrontation and disagreement with the Government, Territorial fishermen and the consumers they supply. Currently, that seems to be the situation we find ourselves in.

Local fishermen have expressed to me that their voices are not being heard, and based on recent actions I must agree with them. Thus, I am asking for a strategic change in the way NMFS is approaching development of the Magnusan-Stevens requirements. Specifically, I am requesting that, instead of utilizing unwieldy large meetings which include Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, NMFS work directly in smaller formats which involve CFMC and our local fishermen supported by NMFS staff. Additionally, instead of attempting to predetermine the outcome of such meetings, NMFS enter into the effort with receptivity and include consideration of changes which might have taken place since the 2005 SFA amendment, as well as actions underway by local our fishermen address effort management and other aspects of the local fisheries.

I recognize that there is limited time available to meet the Magnusan-Stevens deadlines and so I recommend that such activities begin immediately and that you lend your support.

Thank you for your efforts in this regard, and I am prepared to assist in this endeavor.

Respectfully,



John P. de Jongh, Jr.
Governor