

Rruais

From: Rruais@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, September 15, 2015 6:36 AM
To: eileen.sobeck@noaa.gov
Cc: alan.risenhoover@noaa.gov
Subject: Urgent "Monument" Designation Process Request!!

Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA/NMFS

Subject: This Communication is a Comment and Urgent Request on the Marine National Monument Designation Process and not on the Substance of the Current Atlantic Proposal

Eileen: thank you again for taking the time to speak with the HMS Advisory Panel last week in Washington. Aside from all the other issues you discussed, it was clear you feel strongly about the possibility of the first ever "Marine National Monument" designations for the Atlantic deep sea canyons and sea mounts and the traditional fishing grounds within the Cashes Ledge and Fippennies Ledge Area in the Gulf of Maine. Most of these Atlantic Ocean locations are, at times, hugely relied on by our hand gear commercial and recreational tuna and other pelagic species fishermen.

This designation is planned using unilateral action by President Obama under the 1906 Antiquities Act on a "fast track" and bypassing the open and transparent democratic processes that have been associated with federal, state and regional efforts to protect and regulate our marine fish resources from the shoreline to and beyond arbitrary political boundaries for the past 45 years. The lack of democratic process for the Atlantic "Marine National Monument" designation has started with a seriously structurally flawed and late announcement (Sept. 3) of a single Town Hall meeting scheduled for tonight (Sept. 15) in Providence, R.I.

I ask you to consider the following:

1. The email announcement of the "Town Hall" meeting was sent by news@meltwaterpress.com, not from NOAA. I gather it is possible that NOAA has outsourced the distribution of this announcement to this PR firm but it would appear (from phone calls I have received from shocked stakeholders) that Meltwater may have been working with an incomplete email list. In my case, I did not recognize the sender and thus did not open the September 3 email as priority business until several days later when time permitted to look at unsolicited email.
2. Normally, many of us may receive between 5 to 10 notices from different NOAA branches each week, but they are always sent by NOAA. Therefore "NOAA" is in the sender address in each email transmission. If suddenly, NOAA should decide to send notices using a completely different sender address, it is very likely that any such email will automatically wind up in many constituents "junk or spam" folders and the email will not be seen. I do not recall any notices of a change in distribution process in regards to email and news from NOAA at any time in the recent past.
3. On Friday 9/11 one of our Board members contacted Ciaran Clayton, Director of Communications of NOAA, requesting any information on the proposal and asking if any further public comment sessions were scheduled. Ms. Clayton responded as follows: "Thanks for your email and your interest. We don't have any additional materials beyond the invitation at this point. In addition, no other briefings or public meetings have been scheduled."
4. For a NOAA action potentially affecting tens of thousands of highly migratory fishermen from Texas to Maine, we might normally see 15 to 20 public hearings spanning several months and with volumes of benefit and impact analysis available electronically with summaries available or links provided with the meeting notices.
5. We also contacted several other individuals at NOAA, seeking contacts to whom we should direct our enquiries on this critical issue. Without exception, the many contacts I have within NOAA/NMFS/Councils stated they had no further information and, in some cases, were not even aware of the proposal.
6. Absent any detailed critical specific information from NOAA, we took to scouring the internet and media sources for any leads or information. This led us to the Conservation Law Foundation and PEW sites where the electronic petitions were available and where incomplete, inaccurate, emotional and misleading

information was presented. Again, an effort to find factual information on the current protections and processes in place were not available for the general public or directly affected constituencies.

7. Repeated requests to determine which NOAA authorities or other federal officials would be presenting the Administration plans this evening for detailed and careful consideration of the far reaching impacts of the designations have not been successful. Even if some qualitative and anecdotal information is available at the single, 2 hour public meeting on September 3, it is totally unrealistic to expect that those in attendance will be in a position to provide adequate public comment by the end of the oral or written comment period this evening.

Thus, on behalf of ABTA's significant fishing and land based supporting industry membership potentially directly impacted by this proposal, I respectfully request that:

- The public comment period be extended for a reasonable period of time;
- That NOAA directly contact all stakeholders by email, regular mail and other media sources regularly employed by the Agency on potential major regulatory actions and notify all about all aspects of this matter;
- Additional public hearings be scheduled along the eastern seaboard and Gulf of Mexico and stakeholders be notified;
- And that NOAA provide detailed information on the specific measures and regulations that "Marine National Monument Designation" would create in the selected areas and their expected negative and positive short and long term impacts on tuna, lobster and traditional fishermen relying on these areas.

Frankly, about the only thing transparent to most of us directly involved in marine resource management is that this "Monument" matter is another politically inspired attempt to circumvent the lawful, democratic processes of marine resource protection through quality research and peer reviewed science. This Atlantic "Monument" political railroad ride process is not consistent with NOAA's normal excellence in achieving its dual mission to "Enrich life through science" or to keep "Science at the foundation of all NOAA does".

If the consideration and implementation process tract for the first Atlantic "Monument" is not righted, it will be a permanent stain on its legitimacy and any delusional comparisons as the "Yellowstone of the North Atlantic" should send Yogi Bear into a long hibernation or migration.

Thanks for considering our views.

Rich

CC: ABTA Board of Directors