



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



**For Immediate Release
Office of the Director
Oct. 17, 2007**

Statement from the Director

Subject: Moratorium on fishing of eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna

Strong action must be taken immediately to prevent the collapse of the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock of bluefin tuna. Continued overfishing of this seriously depleted stock has convinced me to go to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) this fall to seek a moratorium on this fishery for three-to-five years to give the stock time to begin recovery. This November, I will call on the European Commission and the other 44 member nations of ICCAT to join the United States on the side of conservation. We need a determined international effort to save this truly magnificent fish. Given continued blatant violations of catch limits, closed areas, and reporting requirements, a moratorium is the best hope if we want to avert disaster for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna. The western stock of bluefin tuna intermixes with the much larger eastern stock, and there is real concern about the impact of uncontrolled eastern bluefin catches on western Atlantic bluefin tuna caught by our fishermen. The United States is committed to taking necessary steps to ensure the future of both stocks of bluefin tuna.

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William T. Hogarth is Director of NOAA Fisheries Service, head of the U.S. delegation to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, and chairman of ICCAT. He discusses the proposed moratorium in greater detail in his column, "Bill's Corner," at www.nmfs.noaa.gov