

July 15, 2021

Mr. Randy Blankinship  
HMS Management Division  
Office of Sustainable Fisheries, F/SF1  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East West Highway  
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RE: NOAA NMFS 2018-0035

We the undersigned organizations representing recreational fishermen, conservationists, and scientists appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments on the reconsideration of the conversion of the Spring Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Areas (GRAs) to a Monitoring Area. A diverse coalition is unified in our opposition to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries' April 2020 rulemaking that reopened the Gulf GRAs to pelagic longline fishing. Reopening of the GRAs met with overwhelming public opposition and, most importantly, was inconsistent with science-based policy. The GRAs proved a highly effective conservation measure to protect western Atlantic bluefin tuna at the peak of their spawning. Removing them potentially harms western Atlantic bluefin tuna as well as U.S. commercial and recreational fishermen. Information collected since the removal of the GRAs reinforces



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