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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2402

August 24, 2007

Ms. Mary Anne Calamas
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Ms. Calamas:

I am writing to you on behalf of the US farm-raised catfish industry in Mississippi. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is currently pursuing a poorly considered and economically damaging regulation on the importation and transportation of black carp.

For over 6 years the US Fish and Wildlife Service has attempted to enforce a rule banning the interstate transportation of black carp. America aquaculture farmers rely heavily on the black carp as the only biological means to control snails in their farms. These snails can damage catfish aquaculture farms and have a disastrous impact on the communities that are so dependent on the US Farm-raised catfish industry. In fact, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for the original introduction of the black carp to the United States in the 1970's. Currently, the US Fish and Wildlife Service proposes no viable or legal alternatives to control snail infestation currently served by the black carp.

Aquaculture farming is a small business and this ruling will have an adverse economic impact on over 80 percent of those farms. At this time the US farm raised catfish industry is facing an enormous threat from imports from Asia. For the first four months of this year, imports are up over 600% from 2006 levels. On a live weight basis this equates to a projected 287 million pounds for the year. These imports represent over one-third of all US catfish consumption. As a result, the domestic industry is in survival mode for economic sustainability as Chinese imports are being dumped at prices well below the cost of production.

Recognizing the concerns that the US Fish and Wildlife Service may have, the catfish industry has proposed a solution that not only allows continued use of black carp, but also eliminates any threat of black carp reproduction in the event of accidental release into the wild. This entails the exclusive use of triploid fish which are sterile and therefore incapable of reproduction.

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I respectfully, ask that you rule against the US Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed rule to apply the Lacey Act to black carp and employ the proposed triploid alternative. The current rule banning all black carp from intrastate transportation will have catastrophic affects on the state of Mississippi and the supporting industry of US Farm-raised catfish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

BGT:kg