

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 18, 2019

Dr. Jonathan Pennock
Director
National Sea Grant Office
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-734-1066

Dear Dr. Pennock:

We write in support of the application submitted by the University of Maine, Auburn University, Mote Marine Laboratory, and Nova Southeastern University to NOAA's Highly Migratory Species Research Grant Program for their proposed Pelagic Ecosystem Research Consortium (PERC).

The University of Maine, Auburn University of Alabama, Mote Marine Laboratory of the Florida Gulf coast, and Nova Southeastern University of the Florida Atlantic coast have formed a multi-state, university and nonprofit-based collaboration of scientists working to protect and conserve commercially and recreationally valuable Highly Migratory Species (HMS) of fishes in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. This coalition of leading marine science institutions has expertise pertaining to all HMS fishes in the Atlantic and Gulf, including tuna, billfishes, and sharks. The Consortium partners with state and federal agencies, the fishing and seafood industries, fisheries managers, and other universities and nonprofit organizations. This funding would support PERC's work in the coming year and allow for expanded and enhanced research.

America's coastal communities depend on HMS fisheries as a billion-dollar economic engine. Bluewater offshore sport fishing creates jobs and drives coastal tourism and recreation. Many anglers who visit our coastal communities are nonresidents, and their tourism benefits in those communities. We understand that the lack of basic information on HMS stocks hinders management, thereby threatening jobs and job creation, seafood supply chains, coastal community resilience, and cherished "way of life" fishing traditions. Filling knowledge gaps about the life history, biology, and population status of the iconic and commercially valued highly migratory tunas, billfishes, and sharks is therefore critical.

Thank you for your consideration of the coalition's application. We encourage your careful evaluation of this application, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you please notify [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Richard C. Shelby
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator