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Dear Margo,

As an angler, who enjoys fishing off the east coast of Florida in the closed zone, I have witnessed since 2001 significant improved fishing in those waters, especially swordfish, sailfish, marlin and other species. More fish in the waters means more fishing opportunities for individuals and more charter boat business. Tourists come each year to catch swordfish in those waters and that also benefits businesses. Buoy gear now fishing in the zone does not catch bycatch like the longlines did; even undersize fish can be released alive.

Please view the linked CNN video, in which Dr. Kerstetter and longline owner Scott Taylor state very clearly why buoy gear is much cleaner than longline gear – it's a sustainable way to fish.  
<http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2012/10/15/zarella-eco-swordfish.cnn>

Authorizing the EFP lets the fox in the hen house to count the chickens it eats; wiping out the resource. The closed zone's effectiveness is clear with recovered swordfish stocks, very high catches of sailfish, increased yellowfin catches, increased sightings of bluefin tuna and increased interaction with inshore species. The facts attest to the success of the closed zone!!

Why not continue and build upon the realized conservation successes? Any doubt as to the results of a change in policy should err to benefit the marine creatures, isn't that the precautionary approach? The government should protect the zone's conservation successes and not make a pawn of them. Allowing longline boats in the zone will likely drive down stock abundance by killing sharks, including dusky, marlin, sailfish, sea turtles, some juvenile swordfish and many other species. The U.S. commercial swordfish quota deficit cannot be landed from within the closed zone; why diminish the realized successes?

Do not authorize the EFP and jeopardize the fish, sea turtles, sharks, related businesses or the great recreational and buoy gear fishing opportunities. I cannot see a credible basis for considering what is being proposed as a research project in the closed zone, especially in light of the applicants' own testimony on CNN of the negatives of using pelagic longline gear.

Thank you,