



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NORTHEAST REGION  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Robert L. O'Reilly  
Marine Resources Commission  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
2600 Washington Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Newport News, VA 23607

MAR 20 2013

Dear Mr. O'Reilly:

Thank you for bringing the 2010 letter requesting amendments to the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan boundaries near Chesapeake Bay for striped bass gillnet fishing to my attention. I have discussed this issue with my Protected Resources Division staff and we will include this topic for discussion at the upcoming Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Team (Team) meeting in April.

This issue is one that we have discussed for several years. In fact, the proposal you included in your letter was discussed previously and not supported by the Team due to concerns about high levels of harbor porpoise bycatch occurring coast-wide at that time. However, recent estimates indicating a decline in the rate of harbor porpoise bycatch warrants re-opening the topic of striped bass gillnet fishing near Chesapeake Bay for discussion.

Next month's Team meeting will include an opportunity for public comment at the conclusion of each day, and we welcome any fishermen with whom you work to address the Team at that time. As we finalize the agenda for the meeting, we will gladly inform you of the day on which this issue will be discussed.

Thank you again for submitting this letter and for your feedback on my listening session. I look forward to continuing our work together on this issue and others.

Sincerely,

John K. Bullard  
Regional Administrator

