FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

February 14, 2019

The Honorable Don Young
U.S. House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Young:

Thank you for your letter regarding the importance of radiofrequency markers for America's fisheries. I understand how Alaskan fishermen need effective communications technologies to improve safety, reduce bycatch, and facilitate comprehensive monitoring of their work at sea. Accordingly, the Federal Communications Commission has authorized radio buoys operating in the 1,900–2,000 kHz band for identifying and tracking fishing lines and nets on the open sea to promote safety and efficiency and to prevent accidental entanglement and mitigate loss at sea. Users may choose between continuous transmitting or radio buoys that transmit only after receiving a selective calling signal from the associated ship station.

Last year, it came to the attention of the FCC that some fishermen were using non-compliant radiofrequency devices in the 156.775–162.025 MHz band to mark and track fishing nets. This frequency band is actively monitored by the U.S. Coast Guard for marine navigation safety communications such as locating ships and persons in distress. Use of radiofrequency devices in this band for non-safety related communications could impede the Coast Guard's ability to carry out its mission of aiding ships in distress—an outcome no one desires.

As you note in your letter, the International Telecommunications Union is currently studying other uses for the 156.775–162.025 MHz band, with a critical eye towards expanding its uses without endangering the safety of life or vessels at sea. But that proceeding has not yet concluded, and as a result, the FCC has not made additional authorizations at this time (nor have newer technologies been developed and deployed that might address the problem). This is why the Enforcement Bureau recently released an enforcement advisory on the matter.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

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THE CHAIRMAN

February 14, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Thank you for your letter regarding the importance of radiofrequency markers for America's fisheries. I understand how Alaskan fishermen need effective communications technologies to improve safety, reduce bycatch, and facilitate comprehensive monitoring of their work at sea. Accordingly, the Federal Communications Commission has authorized radio buoys operating in the 1,900–2,000 kHz band for identifying and tracking fishing lines and nets on the open sea to promote safety and efficiency and to prevent accidental entanglement and mitigate loss at sea. Users may choose between continuous transmitting or radio buoys that transmit only after receiving a selective calling signal from the associated ship station.

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February 14, 2019

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sullivan:

Thank you for your letter regarding the importance of radiofrequency markers for America's fisheries. I understand how Alaskan fishermen need effective communications technologies to improve safety, reduce bycatch, and facilitate comprehensive monitoring of their work at sea. Accordingly, the Federal Communications Commission has authorized radio buoys operating in the 1,900–2,000 kHz band for identifying and tracking fishing lines and nets on the open sea to promote safety and efficiency and to prevent accidental entanglement and mitigate loss at sea. Users may choose between continuous transmitting or radio buoys that transmit only after receiving a selective calling signal from the associated ship station.

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