



WEST PALM BEACH FISHING CLUB

~ Established 1934 ~



November 29, 2016

Prime Minister Perry Christie
Office of the Prime Minister
Sir Cecil Wallace Whitfield Centre
P.O. Box CB 10980
Nassau, N.P. The Bahamas

Dear Prime Minister Christie:

On behalf of the more than 1,300 members of the West Palm Beach Fishing Club (WPBFC) I write to you to express our sincere gratitude regarding your firm stance that the Bahamian government has no interest in granting commercial fishing leases to Chinese vessels. We share your belief that allowing this to occur would result in irrevocable harm to the Bahamian economy, the regions abundant marine resources, and the country's unique culture.

For decades the WPBFC has worked with many groups and agencies to keep exploitive fishing practices such as pelagic long-lining, large scale fish trapping, and purse seining from Bahamian waters. We have supported the efforts of the Bahamian government to create marine parks to provide added protections to fragile reefs. We have also cooperatively worked with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish reasonable management regulations that keep the recreational harvest and transportation of marine fish caught in the Bahamas in check. Granting foreign commercial fishing vessels access to Bahamian waters would put much of these past efforts at risk, along with the influx of tourism dollars that come each year from visiting boaters, anglers, and divers.

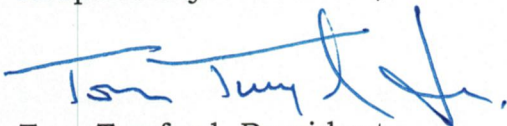
Commercial fishing efforts by Chinese vessels would take advantage of marine fish that are vital to Bahamian tourism. The Chinese do not have a strong conservation record when it comes to other countries' resources, and once they gain access their impact usually expands. Fish such as yellowfin tuna, dolphin, wahoo, blue marlin, and others are far too

valuable of a commodity to allow foreign fishing vessels to exploit. Countless fishing tournaments, group outings, and seasonal boaters who generate millions of dollars annually throughout the islands would be jeopardized, along with the livelihoods of those who depend upon these tourism dollars.

Some WPBFC members have been visiting the Bahamas for over 60 years. Hundreds of our members plan trips to the islands annually. Some visit several times a year, while others stay for extended periods of time. Some have even purchased property. Our club has organized and lead groups of sportfishermen to the Bahamas for over two decades. We have had as many as 63 boats participate in past outings. The local economic impact each of these boats has is significant. Through the years we have established many wonderful relationships with the people associated with some of the smaller marinas and resort destinations throughout the islands and look forward to seeing them each year. Thank you for not putting these relationships at risk.

Together we have worked hard to establish sustainable fishing practices that benefit Bahamians and visiting anglers alike. We sincerely thank you for your strong stance toward protecting one of the Bahamas greatest assets and recognizing that a sustainable management approach that keeps the country's marine resources in the hands of Bahamians makes the most sense for your country and those of us who enjoy visiting on a regular basis.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Twyford", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Twyford, President
West Palm Beach Fishing Club

Cc: Pete Schulz, WPBFC Chairman
John Jolley, WPBFC Scientific Advisor
Gregg Waugh, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Candia Dames, Managing Editor, The Nassau Guardian
The Honorable Obediah Wilchombe, Minister of Tourism
The Honorable Alfred Gray, Minister of Agriculture, Marine
Resources and Local Government