P.O. Box 1828
Kenai, HI 96749

[redacted]

F/HC
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RECEIVED

AUG 1 7 2004

Office of
Habitat Conservation

Dear Mr. Schmitten,

I am writing to urge you to adopt the rule that is requested for protecting deep sea corals as set out in 69 Fed. Reg. 32991 (June 14, 2004). Coral and sponge habitats are too vulnerable and valuable -- for ocean health and potentially for human pharmaceuticals -- to allow bottom trawling fishing vessels to destroy them.

The proposed rule would provide the most reasonable protection from damage to living sponges and corals while having the least harmful impact on the economic wellbeing of existing fisheries and fishing communities.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

David Dewenter