Jan 9, 2008

Representative Joe Knollenberg
Independence Avenue and 1st Street, SW
Washington, DC 20515-2209

Dear Representative Knollenberg,

As a supporter of Defenders of Wildlife, I hope you will do everything in your power to improve mercury testing of imported canned tuna.

More than half of the tuna consumed by American families comes from non-U.S. producers. But some of these producers, particularly in Ecuador and Mexico, use practices that can hurt or kill dolphins and catch tuna with increased mercury levels.

In the Eastern Pacific Ocean, large, mature yellowfin tuna often swim with pods of dolphins -- a relationship that's exploited by some commercial fishers using purse-seine nets that ensnare tuna and dolphins alike.

Since the late 1950s, approximately seven million dolphins have died from this practice. As a result, three dolphin populations in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean -- the northeastern offshore spotted, the eastern spinner, and the coastal spotted -- are listed as officially "depleted" under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The practice poses an obvious risk to dolphins, but the large tuna that swim with dolphins often contain the highest levels of mercury. So this practice not only harms dolphins, it also poses a risk to people who are unlucky enough to eat tuna caught in such a manner.

Eating mercury-contaminated tuna can increase the risk of a host of health problems, including brain damage in children and heart attacks in adults.

More comprehensive testing is critical to ensuring America's favorite fish is safe to eat and will help keep canned tuna safe for our families. Consumers deserve clear and well-researched advice on tuna

consumption to protect everyone from unacceptable exposure to mercury.

Thank you for considering my comments on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sylvia Fitzpatrick
113 Amelia Ave
Royal Oak, MI 48073-2620