Ms. Moreno: My name is Ignacia Moreno and I’m the Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resource Division at the United States Department of Justice.

I think that it’s fair to say that this is a wide-reaching investigation. The pounds harvested illegally were in excess of 1 million pounds. We’ve had 19 defendants who have either pled guilty or been convicted, involving three companies. So we consider this to be a major, wide-ranging investigation and prosecution.

If the conspiracy had continued, we are certain that there would have been significant adverse impacts on this species of fish. The species did bounce back after the moratorium that was in place from 1985 to 1991. The illegal acts that have been alleged by the government and proven by the government go back to 1995. This is 1995 to 2007 is the period of time that this conspiracy was illegally harvesting and taking and selling fish. And absolutely, we are certain that without stopping this enterprise, we would see adverse consequences on the fish. And you can’t just count on the fish recovering again. So enforcement is very, very important to the ultimate enjoyment by those of us who enjoy the fish now and for generations to come.

I think the message is that if you are in this business, you should comply with the law. The law has been on the books for a long time. It is clear and it is important to comply with the law. For those companies and individuals who comply with the law, we want to make sure that they know that others who don’t comply with the law will be held to task and they will not be able to enjoy the economic benefit of non-compliance.

It was absolutely terrific to work with the Fish and Wildlife team as well as others at the state and federal level to address these very, very important issues.

###