

NORTHEAST SEAFOOD COALITION

December 20, 2004

Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Ms. Kurkul:

The Northeast Seafood Coalition submits the following in response to the request for public comments in the following solicitation:

Interim Final Rule to implement the Framework Adjustment 40-A (FW 40-A) to the NE Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) published in the Federal Register on November 19, 2004 at 69 FR 67780.

Founded in January 2002, Northeast Seafood Coalition (NSC) represents over 300 fishermen participating in all the predominant groundfish gear sectors including trawl, gillnet and hook gear, and 60 shore-side businesses from Maine to Long Island New York. The mission of the NSC is to promote a healthy and sustainable commercial fishing and seafood industry comprised of family owned business and viable ports. NSC encourages, and inherently supports, reasonable and rational fishery management measures that are based on sound science and legislation.

As always, NSC is grateful for the opportunity to provide public comments on important administrative and regulatory procedures that affect our membership. NSC particularly appreciates the efforts of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) through this Interim Final Rule and request for comments to provide for the effective implementation of FW 40-A.

More specifically, NSC and its members greatly appreciate the Agency's adoption of several important recommendations made by NSC in its comments on the Proposed Rule concerning the Regular B DAS program and with respect to combined trips to the Western US/Canada Area. The approval and implementation of the Regular B DAS and Eastern US/CAN Haddock SAP Pilot Programs, as well as the improvements to the monitoring and management measures for the Western US/Canada Area, represent important opportunities to mitigate the adverse economic impacts of rebuilding stocks of concern by improving access to the strong stocks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jackie Odell,
Executive Director