



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
THE DIRECTOR

MAR 29 2016

Ms. Jackie Odell
Northeast Seafood Coalition
4 Parker Street, Suite 202
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Ms. Odell:

Thank you for your letter regarding the industry-funded at-sea monitoring program for the Northeast multispecies sector program. I share your concerns about the economic challenges facing the groundfish industry. We understand that the current contracts between the Northeast Fishery Sectors and their monitoring providers do not indicate the sectors' support of the requirement to fund the industry's costs for the at-sea monitoring program.

We worked with the New England Fishery Management Council to identify potential improvements to the at-sea monitoring program in Framework Adjustment 55 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. We are reviewing the framework to determine if it meets the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and other applicable laws, and intend to implement approved measures in time for the start of the 2016 fishing year on May 1, 2016. In addition, the Council's top priority for the groundfish plan in 2016 is to further evaluate the groundfish monitoring program. We are committed to continuing to work with the Council and all stakeholders to make the at-sea monitoring program as cost effective as possible while still meeting the necessary requirements of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

I appreciate your interest in improving the efficiency of the at-sea monitoring program. Please feel free to contact John Bullard, Regional Administrator of the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office at (978) 281-9250, to remain engaged in this process.

Sincerely,

Eileen Sobeck

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES

