

NORTHEAST SEAFOOD COALITION

July 16, 2010

Dear Governor Patrick,

Thank you so very much for coming to Gloucester this Wednesday to hear from fishermen about the extreme financial pressure they are under to sell their groundfish permits and make way for large-scale consolidation in the groundfish industry. We deeply appreciate your keen interest and concern in this critical matter, and we look forward to our planned call today (Friday) to follow up our meeting.

To facilitate our discussion, I wanted to provide you with a list of the five things we think are essential in the immediate term to fend off business failures and consolidation and all the damages these would bring to people, jobs, communities, and infrastructure. These are all matters we discussed on Wednesday, but we thought it would be useful to provide you a written list. These are the immediate solutions the Northeast Seafood Coalition seeks to put before President Obama. For the record, we also have longer term solutions, which we are happy to discuss with you at the appropriate time.

Immediate Term Solutions:

(1) Annual catch limits: Increase annual catch limits to levels **below overfishing levels** – we DO NOT SUPPORT overfishing – **but above current levels**.

(2) Economic assistance (three inter-related needs):

(a) Provide economic assistance to individual permit holders, to compensate for the radical devaluation of permits made by Amendment 16; and

(b) Provide monies to support training for 21st century fishermen: Training programs to equip fishermen to participate and flourish in the 21st century fishery: computer skills, sustainable fishing, and branding and marketing, and other skills; and

(c) Increase economic assistance to sectors, in order to lower fishermen's costs of fishing in sectors. Assistance monies would be used to cover operational costs of sectors, catch monitoring costs (at sea and onshore), and, for sectors who so chose, an intra-sector lease support program (enabling permit holders to lease their quota within their sector at rates that give real value to the lessor but are affordable for the lessee).

(3) Programs to stimulate private sector development of marine research and marine industry in New England's (including Massachusetts') ports. Fishermen with low catch quota associated with their permits should be able to hold onto their permits and work in marine research or industry while the fishery rebuilds. Once catch quotas increase,

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these fishermen can fish in the rebuilt fishery. Fishermen's well-honed skills with vessels and in the marine environment will be a boon to marine industry and research.

(4) Stock assessments: Increase the frequency of stock assessments and modernize the methods and the types of data used in stock assessments. This may well require the hiring of more stock assessment scientists – and other scientists – at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center.

(5) Change of attitude in the Department of Commerce: Staff and officials in the Department of Commerce (in which NOAA and NOAA Fisheries resides) do not recognize the value of working together with fishermen to solve the challenge of rebuilding the fishery without, at the same time, destroying the fishery. Most fishermen are extremely knowledgeable about many aspects of the fishery and are very willing to offer their expertise in developing solutions. DOC staff and officials and fishermen need to work together – this does not mean “listening sessions” – to produce successful, workable management and sustainable, rebuilt fisheries.

Thank you. We look forward to working with you and your staff in the immediate future.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Odell
Executive Director

cc: David Cash, Assistant Secretary of Policy, Executive Office of Energy &
Environmental Affairs
Mary Griffin, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game
Paul Diodati, Director, Massachusetts' Division of Marine Fisheries