

NORTHEAST SEAFOOD COALITION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NSC STATEMENT ON FEDERAL DISASTER DECLARATION FOR NE GROUNDFINCH FISHING INDUSTRY

September 13, 2012—Gloucester, Mass. Today, the Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce declared a disaster for the Northeast commercial groundfish fishing industry. The Northeast Seafood Coalition (“NSC”) is grateful to the support of our diligent Members of Congress and other elected officials including Governors of the affected states for their ongoing and relentless push for a declaration.

The request for a groundfish fishery disaster was first initiated by Governor Patrick in November 2010. Following up on Gov. Patrick’s efforts, NSC wrote to Governors of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey to urge them to submit a request to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for a coordinated fisheries disaster in light of pending reductions for this current fishing year and the upcoming fishing year. Since our request, there has been a well-coordinated regional effort by the Governors and Congressional leaders for which we are extremely appreciative.

At this time, there are significant short and long-term challenges that lie ahead and this declaration is a significant leap forward. For many years now, fishermen have complied with stringent scientific and management requirements and they have not exceeded the allowable catches. However, despite the combined effort from fishermen and managers to rebuild groundfish stocks, according to recent scientific assessments, several key stocks in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank are not achieving anticipated results of management actions. It is unfair to hold fishermen accountable for natural cycles of complex ecosystems. NSC believes it's time to review and understand the larger picture of this ecosystem and develop strategies that are more reflective of this reality.

Today’s disaster declaration makes it possible for Congress to appropriate money toward assisting fishermen and directly impacted parties. NSC views federal disaster relief as an important component of a plan for 2013 and beyond. It provides fishermen with an essential bridge to the future when fundamental, longer-term solutions can be implemented. NSC recognizes and expresses its deep appreciation to Senator Kerry for his leadership in working with Congressional offices throughout the Northeast region to develop a specific disaster assistance appropriations request, and for securing assurances from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to identify a legislative vehicle for this funding during the ‘lame duck’ session of Congress after the November elections.

NSC—the largest membership organization in the northeast groundfish fishery, which represents a majority of the active fishermen in the region—looks forward to working with our membership, the New England Fishery Management Council, NOAA Fisheries, State Directors, and members of Congress on all steps moving forward.

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About the Northeast Seafood Coalition:

The Northeast Seafood Coalition is a non-profit organization representing over 250 commercial fishing entities, which hold over 500 limited access groundfish permits, in the northeast United States on political and policy issues affecting their interests as participants in the groundfish fishery and the Sector program

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in the Northeast multispecies groundfish fishery. NSC members are small, independent, entrepreneurial businesses that fish for—and support fishing for—cod, haddock, flounders, and other groundfish species along the northeast coast. NSC's fishing business members fish from small and large ports all along the northeast coast. They fish small, medium, and large vessels, and they employ all groundfish gear types.

NSC works for rules that embody real solutions to complex fishery problems.