

January 30, 2014

The Honorable Chellie M. Pingree
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mike Michaud
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Carol Shea-Porter
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Ann McLane Kuster
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable William R. Keating
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable John F. Tierney
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable James P. McGovern
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard E. Neal
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy, III
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Michael E. Capuano
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Niki Tsongas
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Katherine Clark
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable David N. Cicilline
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jim Langevin
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Joe Courtney
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Tim Bishop
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank A. LoBiondo
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jon Runyan
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of the members of the Northeast Seafood Coalition, the Associated Fisheries of Maine and the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance we thank you for your extraordinary efforts to secure critically needed disaster assistance for the northeast groundfish fishery in FY 2014 appropriations. Together, our membership represents a substantial majority of groundfish businesses in the northeast.

Recently, we were tasked by members of the Appropriations Committee and Northeast delegation to prepare and submit to them an industry spending plan for the disaster assistance. In the coming days we intend to actively collaborate, with direct input from our Boards and members, on developing a plan that will maximize direct benefits to fishing businesses impacted by this disaster. While we will need some time to complete this task, we wanted to notify you that we intend to be fully responsive to the request.

Initially, we want to highlight that although there are many important aspects of fishery management that need continued financial support and improvement in the northeast groundfish fishery, we believe this appropriation was made specifically for the purpose of mitigating the impacts of the fishery disaster on our fishery and should be strictly applied for that purpose. Therefore, we feel strongly that it is not appropriate to allocate any of these funds to ongoing management priorities including observer coverage, cooperative research, assessments or other elements of the National Marine Fisheries Service budget, or those initiatives such as marketing that could be funded through other sources such as the S-K program.

As a general principle, we believe that a spending plan should take a regional approach in order to encourage consistency among the states. Additionally, we believe that the funding allocated for the northeast groundfish fishery disaster should be sub-divided into two categories of assistance for immediate economic injury and the future viability of the fishery. We emphasize that the first category of assistance should be used to provide direct disaster mitigation to affected fishing businesses as quickly as possible. Under the second category we intend to explore longer-term initiatives including a groundfish permit buyback. While there are a number of very important details to work out with our Boards and membership, we all agree that the industry should work hard to build a collaborative and comprehensive proposal for a permit buyback that will be widely supported by the industry. This process will need to be inclusive, industry-led and focused on achieving shared goals for the fishery.

We want to close by saying once again that we deeply appreciate the fishery disaster assistance Congress has provided for our fishery as a result of your efforts. We will do our very best to build a consensus industry plan to achieve the dual objectives of mitigating the impacts of this disaster and building a more stable future for the northeast groundfish fishery. We look forward to submitting this plan to you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Jackie Odell
Northeast Seafood Coalition

Maggie Raymond
Associated Fisheries of Maine

Tom Dempsey
Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance

Cc:

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary, US Department of Commerce

Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator
NOAA / NMFS

Samuel D. Rauch III, Deputy Assistant
Administrator for Regulatory Programs
NOAA / NMFS

John K. Bullard, Northeast Regional
Administrator
NOAA/NMFS

The Honorable Paul LePage,
Governor of Maine

The Honorable Maggie Hassan,
Governor of New Hampshire

The Honorable Deval Patrick,
Governor of Massachusetts

The Honorable Lincoln Chafee,
Governor of Rhode Island

The Honorable Dannel Malloy,
Governor of Connecticut

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo,
Governor of New York

Patrick Keliher, Commissioner
ME Department of Marine Resources

Terry Stockwell
ME Department of Marine Resources

Janet Coit, Director
RI Department of Environmental
Management

Mark Gibson, Acting Chief
RI Division of Fish and Wildlife

Mary Griffin, Commissioner
MA Department of Fish & Game

Paul Diodati, Director
MA Division of Marine Fisheries

David E. Pierce, Deputy Director
Division of Marine Fisheries

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Protection, Marine Fisheries Division

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NH Fish and Game Department

Cheri Patterson, Supervisor
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