

November 13, 2011

Dear Senators Kerry and Brown, Congressmen Tierney and Frank:

Thank you for your continued interest in the well being of New England groundfish fishermen.

We are the owners of several Boston based groundfish vessels. We have been involved in the groundfish fishery for 20 or more years. We have invested heavily in the fishery with both hard work and financial capital.

Due to the strict requirements of the Magnuson Stevens Act, the National Marine Fisheries Service was obligated to implement severe reductions in fishing mortality under Amendment 16. For example: Gulf of Maine cod 37%, Georges Bank cod 50%, Southern New England winter flounder 100%.

These required reductions have produced an entire fleet of boats with very low allocations. No one permit holder has enough fish to remain economically viable. We, along with many others in the fishery, have had to invest in additional permits and/or consolidate our allocations to fewer vessels in response.

We were initially skeptical of the sector management system. After 16 amendments and 46 framework adjustments to the plan, we now see that sector management has the possibility of providing much needed stability in the fishery.

It is important for our Congressional leaders to recognize that it is the requirements of the law that are responsible for fewer boats and fewer fishermen in New England. It is not the sector management system. Given the kinds of reductions in mortality required by law, it is a miracle that more jobs have not been lost.

Unfortunately, a small number of vocal critics have called for the abolishment of the sector system without providing a viable alternative. Other critics are calling for reallocation and limitations on leasing allocation between vessel classes under the guise of “fleet diversity” (amendment 18).

If fleet diversity means maintaining vessels of all sizes, we’re all for that. We cannot, however, support a reshuffling of the deck on allocation or regulations that would prevent us from freely moving allocations among our vessels. We are not happy with the way the original allocation came out – especially the allocation of Gulf of Maine cod to the recreational fleet – but we think it would do more harm than good to start that fight all over again.

We own the kind of boats that can fish year round and under poor weather conditions in order to bring fresh groundfish across the dock every day. Currently we are facing a

crisis with the cost of fuel. We need action by managers to optimize catch levels by opening areas now closed to fishing. Simply put, we need to catch enough fish to pay the bills and give the crew a decent paycheck.

We understand that you are looking for ways to help the New England fishermen. You could help us best by securing long term funding for at sea monitoring programs, and by encouraging managers to open closed areas in order to tighten the gap between catch and scientifically set catch levels. Please step back from the battles on allocation and leave that to the fishery managers.

If we can provide additional information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

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