

To the New England Fisheries Management Council,

My name is Jay Driscoll, and I have been a commercial fisherman working out of Rye Harbor, New Hampshire for the last twenty years. I am also the Sector President for the NH Sectors X and XII.

I'm writing you because the consolidation that we are seeing in the groundfish fishery is a serious problem.

In NH our entire fleet is made up of small day boat fishermen. Our heritage has been based solely on what we could catch off of our coastline, primarily cod and pollock. We do not have the resources to venture out into larger fishing grounds such as Georges Bank. When NMFS asked us several years back to diversify our catch and to look for alternative fisheries, we followed the advice to a fault and began fishing for monk, dogfish, shrimp and other species. Yet now, we are being penalized for doing what you asked us to do. With our entire future riding on history based allocations, we cannot compete with the larger fishing fleets of Gloucester and New Bedford as our history is much smaller as a direct result of trying to branch out into these diverse fisheries.

The repercussions of the extreme consolidation we are seeing, both in the buying and leasing market, is having a domino effect on our fishermen and their families as well as the small harbors and communities they serve, indeed on the entire footprint of New Hampshire. The economic impact is devastating and only serves to further disillusion an already depressed population and economy.

With the allocations being based on historical landings, the largest, most industrial fishing operations have been rewarded with the largest percentage of catch shares and are now poised with a huge competitive advantage in this new market. At the same time, the small, day boat fisherman who have consistently been concerned about sustainability are being pushed out of their livelihoods.

I would like to ask you, what kind of fishery is it that you want to see for the future? It is not ecologically and socially responsible to allow a system where the fishermen who have demonstrated a commitment to sustainability are the first ones gone. I am not saying that the large-scale boats don't have a place in this fishery. They do. What I am saying is that we should not replace a diverse fleet with a monolithic fleet. But that appears the direction we are heading.

I am equally as concerned about the future of the fish stocks as I am about the future of our fleets. Permits and histories have already begun to enter a completely new arena that we have never witnessed before, which in effect, will mean our industry will soon be owned and controlled by large industrial businesses who have no real interest or stake in the future of the industry. We need things put in place to ensure this doesn't happen.

Ask yourselves, what kind of fishery you would like to see for our future? If it includes boats from the state of New Hampshire than I recommend you address this problem immediately. The Council has prioritized an amendment to address fleet diversity. I urge you to continue this work and not delay another moment.

Sincerely,  
Jay Driscoll  
President New Hampshire Sectors X & XII