

April 22, 2010

RE: Fleet Consolidation and Fleet Diversity

To the New England Fisheries Management Council,

My name is Stuart Tolley and I have been fishing out of Chatham, MA for 41 years.

Belonging to a small boat community, the fishermen in Chatham struggled with Days at Sea and trip limits management. To avoid the excessive daily discards, the CCCHFA initiated the first sector management for cod. In 2006, the gillnetters in Chatham followed suit and started the George's Bank Cod Fixed Gear Sector. With sector management came a variety of issues including the purchasing of permits, protections for the small boat fleets in New England, and fleet diversity quickly consolidating toward the larger vessels.

The small boat fisheries and their communities have had an accumulation of fishing history for decades. Beginning in 2005, this history began to shrink with the purchasing and accumulation of fishing permits, mainly by large vessel owners, fish buyers and other interested buyers. I had always thought that fishing permits were given or purchased for people who fished. I had not realized that fishing permits, which were under a moratorium in 1992, would become investments that could be purchased by any doctor, lawyer, banker or anyone who wanted to make a quick buck. I strongly believe that fishing permits were intended for fishermen and that protections should have been enacted to insure the viability of all the diverse fleets. The distribution of allocation is shifting largely toward the large-scale operations and disabling many of the small boat fishermen.

Consolidation of allocation could have been prevented by protections put in place by the DAS management (vessel size and horsepower limits). The elimination of these management controls has taken the accumulation of small boat fisheries history landings and given it to the larger-scale fish businesses who never caught it.

I believe the Management Council should review fleet diversity and consolidation and insure that protections are enacted for all fishermen and their communities.

Thank You,

Stuart Tolley