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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NORTHEAST REGION  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

JUN - 5 2013



C.M. "Rip" Cunningham Jr., Chairman  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street  
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950

Dear Rip:

As you are aware, the Council, at its November 14, 2012, meeting, agreed to adopt additional goals and objectives in the Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2 to enhance groundfish productivity by improving groundfish spawning protection, improving protection of critical groundfish habitats, and improving the refuge for critical groundfish life history stages.

The joint Groundfish Committee and Habitat Committee met on May 17, 2013, to identify a range of spatial management options and alternatives to include in the Amendment and to potentially provide further guidance to the Council's Closed Area Technical Team (CATT) about how to group different options into alternatives for further analysis and consideration. Unfortunately, by the end of the day, many of the management areas recommended by the CATT to meet the goals and objectives of the Amendment were voted down by the joint Committee without further analysis of their environmental or economic impacts.

At its May 27-28 meeting, the CATT determined that the remaining management areas would not allow for the development of alternatives that could meet the Amendment's goals and objectives. To address this concern, the CATT developed a range of alternatives that address many of the Committees' concerns, while meeting the groundfish objectives and ensuring that the Amendment includes a reasonable range of alternatives. These alternatives offer a potential solution and a way forward. I strongly recommend that the joint Committee and Council include measures that meet the goals and objectives of this Amendment and that provide a reasonable range of alternatives for consideration at upcoming public hearings. To that end, I suggest that the Council consider the CATT's recommendations so we may proceed with this Amendment.

I look forward to discussing this further with the Council at the upcoming June meeting. If you have additional questions in the interim, please contact my groundfish team lead in the Sustainable Fisheries Division, Susan Murphy, at (978) 281-9252.

Sincerely,

John K. Bullard  
Regional Administrator



**cc: Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council**  
**Terry Stockwell, Chair, Groundfish Committee**  
**Dave Preble, Chair, Habitat Committee**