

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

January 3, 2012

The Honorable John E. Bryson
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Law Enforcement Committee has recently become aware of the lack of prosecuting attorneys within NOAA General Counsel's Northeast Region Enforcement Section.

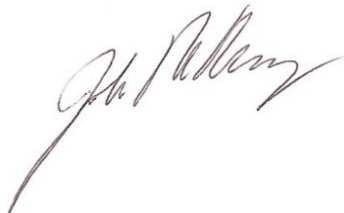
It is our understanding that three attorneys were recently moved to other positions leaving such positions vacant. There is a concern that such vacancies may be adversely affecting the ability of NOAA Fisheries Service to litigate cases brought forth by both federal and state enforcement partners, and that the current situation could be undermining the deterrent effect of enforcement efforts.

A current lag in prosecuting cases has likely not escaped the attention of those who would choose to disregard important laws and regulations designed to protect and sustain the economically important commercial and recreational fisheries the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council manages.

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council we would urge the Department of Commerce to staff the NOAA General Counsel's Office, Northeast Enforcement Section with qualified attorneys as soon as possible. Our fishery management plans can only succeed if there is sufficient effort to ensure compliance.

The Law Enforcement Committee wishes to express its strong support for the continuing efforts of federal enforcement agencies and the NOAA General Counsel's Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John McMurray".

John McMurray
Chair, Law Enforcement Committee

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard B. Robins, Jr.". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping letters.

Richard B. Robins, Jr.
Chair, MAFMC