

Correspondence



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR
MAEVE VALLELY BARTLETT
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000
Fax: (617) 626-1018
<http://www.mass.gov/eea>



July 15, 2014

Assistant Administrator Eileen Sobeck
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: New England Groundfish Disaster Aid

Dear Assistant Administrator Sobeck:

Over the last four years Governor Patrick has supported federal disaster aid for the Commonwealth's groundfishermen. Since 2010 it has been clear that the men and women of our New England fishing communities have been weathering a crisis that has seen their revenue from groundfish harvests plummet despite adhering to federal catch limits. I applauded the Secretary of Commerce's September 2012 decision to declare a federal fishery disaster ahead of the drastic catch limit reductions in fishing year 2013 and our Congressional Delegation's support in securing federal fisheries disaster funding to aid our groundfishermen in February of this year. Yet nearly two years since the original declaration, and months since Congress appropriated funding, our fishermen are still awaiting distribution of these critically needed funds.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is poised to act and begin the process of distributing funds for prequalified permit holders for Phase I direct aid. Concurrently, the Commonwealth is proceeding with an open and transparent public process to develop a Phase II state spending plan. I urge you to expedite review of the Commonwealth's Phase I direct aid so that we may distribute aid to impacted permit holders as soon as possible. Fishermen started a new fishing year over two months ago, and with that new year came new business decisions about fishing-related obligations. Our fishermen need this funding to offset declines in groundfish revenues due to deep catch limit reductions and to make investments to ensure their businesses survive this fishing year and into the future.

Assistant Administrator Sobeck
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Your leadership is needed to support New England's historic groundfishery. We look forward to working cooperatively with NOAA Fisheries to disburse of this critical direct aid as quickly as possible to our groundfishermen. Thank you for your continued partnership and I respectfully request you undertake expedited review of our grant proposal.

Sincerely,



Maeve Vallely Bartlett
Secretary

cc: Massachusetts U.S. Congressional Delegation
Massachusetts Senate President Therese Murray
Massachusetts Senator Bruce Tarr
Massachusetts Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo
Massachusetts Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Mayor Carolyn Kirk, City of Gloucester
Mayor Jon Mitchell, City of New Bedford
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and
NOAA Administrator Dr. Kathryn Sullivan
NOAA Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, John Bullard
Terry Stockwell, Chair NEFMC
Tom Nies, Executive Director, NEFMC
Commissioner Mary Griffin, MA Dept. of Fish and Game
Director Paul Diodati, MA Division of Marine Fisheries



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July 14, 2014

Charlie Wade, President
Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association
P.O. Box 1230
Marshfield, MA 02050

Dear Mr. Wade:

Thank you for your letter to Governor Patrick applauding his efforts on behalf of the Massachusetts fishing industry to secure and distribute federal disaster relief and for sharing your request that the for-hire sector be included as part of the Northeast groundfish disaster relief. As you know, ensuring this aid reaches those in need has been of the utmost importance to Governor Patrick throughout his time in office.

The Patrick Administration is eager to hear from the Commonwealth's fishing community on what they deem to be the most effective uses and programs for the Massachusetts state-specific portion of the federal fisheries disaster relief in order to assist fishermen during this difficult time. As you are likely aware, the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has convened an industry workgroup that includes representatives of the for-hire industry such as Tom DePersia, of Stellwagen Bank Charterboat Association. The industry workgroup, working with DMF, has proposed a number of different programs for the \$8.2 M for state programs, including relief for Massachusetts fishermen that


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were not included in the federal direct aid program, such as the programs that would provide relief for for-hire fishermen with groundfish trips. These proposals developed by the workgroup will be proposed for further public comment this month.

I hope that you and members of your organization will attend and offer public comments on the proposed programs that will assist your businesses affected by the fishing disaster.

Thank you for your ongoing engagement on this issue and input on the best use of the federal disaster relief funds.

Sincerely,



Maeve Valley Bartlett
Secretary

CC:

Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator, NOAA

Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Fisheries

John Bullard, Regional Administrator, GARFO

Tom Nies, Executive Director, NEFMC

Barry Gibson, Chairman, NEFMC Recreational Advisory Panel

Mary Griffin, Commissioner, DFG

Paul Diodati, Director, DMF

Attachment: Schedule of DMF Public Meetings

Public Meetings Scheduled: MA Groundfish Disaster Spending Plan

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game's Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is developing a plan to distribute federal disaster funds to the Commonwealth's groundfishery. Prior to submitting a formal spending plan to NOAA Fisheries, DMF is soliciting input from fishermen and community interests on potential uses of these funds.

On May 28, 2014 the state fishery directors from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York, in partnership with NOAA, announced a framework for the distribution of \$32.8-million in federal disaster aid monies to the New England groundfish industry. In the consensus framework, the six states will apportion available monies equally between three themes (roughly \$11 million in each): for direct assistance, for individual state spending plans, and to support a federally funded buyout or industry-funded buyback.

Federal disaster aid stems from a September 13, 2012 disaster declaration in the Northeast multispecies (groundfish) fishery by the Acting Secretary of Commerce. The disaster designation was requested by Governor Deval Patrick and other elected officials recognizing the severe hardships being faced by commercial fishermen – hardships being felt well before the official May 1, 2013 federal designation.

Initial spending options for the state program, developed by DMF with the assistance of an Industry-based Working Group, include:

- **Direct aid to commercial groundfishermen excluded from initial federal aid and for-hire fishermen;**
- **Crew direct aid & training;**
- **Cooperative research;**
- **Local seafood marketing; and**
- **Shoreside industry direct aid and grants/loans**

Public Meetings Schedule:

North Shore
Monday, July 14, 2014 - 6:00 PM
MA DMF Annisquam River Station
30 Emerson Ave.
Gloucester, MA

South Shore
Tuesday, July 15, 2014 – 6:00 PM
Radisson - Plymouth Harbor
180 Water St.
Plymouth, MA

New Bedford
Wednesday, July 16, 2014 – 6:00 PM
Waypoint Event Center
Marriott Fairfield Inn & Suites
185 MacArthur Dr.

Cape Cod
Thursday, July 17, 2014 – 6:00 PM
Chatham High School
425 Crowell Rd.
Chatham, MA



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
E.F. "Terry" Stockwell III, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

July 9, 2014

Mr. John Bullard
Regional Administrator
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear John:

With the declaration of a groundfish fishery disaster for the 2013 fishing season, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Council have been searching for ways to mitigate the impacts of low catch limits for many groundfish stocks. It is clear that one of the best mitigation tools is to find ways to bring more fish across the docks.

As we end the first quarter of the 2014 fishing season, there is still a need to increase landings where possible. To that end, the Council is aware that there are early indications that the Gulf of Maine (GOM) haddock assessment scheduled for next week (SARC 59) may find that the stock can support higher catches by both the commercial and recreational fisheries. Based on those preliminary reports, the Council passed the following motion at the June Council meeting:

"To send a letter now urging NMFS to modify the Gulf of Maine haddock ACL for FY 2014 and to request an in-season adjustment to the recreational fishery accountability measures for Gulf of Maine haddock based on the final results of the assessment (SARC 59) that would result in a quota increase."

The motion carried on a show of hands (15/1/0).

On behalf of the Council, I urge you to modify the GOM haddock Annual Catch Limit (ACL) as quickly as possible should the assessment results support an increase. At the same time, I also urge you to modify the recreational fishery accountability measures so that they are consistent with the revised ACL. Such an in-season change would provide for increased economic opportunities for the commercial and recreational fisheries.

Thank you for considering the Council's request. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director

cc: Allison Murphy, GARFO

July 23, 2014

Mary B. Griffin, Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game
251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114



Paul Diodati, Director
Division of Marine Fisheries
251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Mary and Paul,

Northeast Fishery Sector 2 (NEFS 2), based in Gloucester, MA, is one of the most active groundfish sectors in the northeast multispecies fishery and our members represent the majority of actively operating vessels fishing in the inshore Gulf of Maine. NEFS 2 members are small family owned commercial groundfish businesses whose vessels utilize trawl gear on 6 large offshore vessels and 24 inshore vessels. Collectively, the members in NEFS 2 hold 81 northeast multispecies permits.

Today we are writing in response to the Division of Marine Fisheries' Memorandums to the New England Fishery Management Council dated June 6, 2014 and June 16, 2014. These Memorandums recommend fishing measures for the Gulf of Maine which go far beyond the steep reductions in catch limits implemented in fishing year 2013, which will remain in place until at least 2015.

NEFS 2 members are gravely concerned with the regulatory measures recommended by MA DMF with no prior communication with our Sector or our members. We are troubled by the MA DMF measures which will only serve to further devastate not protect the inshore fleet which has historically fished west of 70:15. We find ourselves even more alarmed with the direction now being pursued by the New England Fishery Management Council in response to MA DMF recommendations offered.

Like other commercial groundfish businesses, NEFS 2 members have faced very serious economic losses over the past four years. These losses began during the transition of catch share management in 2010, when groundfish stocks were allocated and subdivided between different components of the fishery, and have continued with the recent sharp declines in the ACLs.

As you know, day boats trying to actively fish in the inshore Gulf of Maine have been devastated by the ACL reductions. This includes the ACL reductions implemented for GOM cod as well as GOM haddock, GOM yellowtail, grey sole and dabs for which inshore vessels have relied upon.

The inshore commercial groundfish fleet has limited mobility, few opportunities if any to diversify to other fisheries and is struggling with operational costs. The only hope for some is to maximize efficiencies where and when possible in order to pull through these tough times.

The MA DMF recommendation for large area-closures in the inshore Gulf of Maine with duration of between two to three months (November through January or November through December) is a very bad proposal for the inshore fishery. The proposal does not work for an inshore fisherman from an economic standpoint and it introduces safety issues for inshore vessels that would likely attempt to fish in bad winter weather or outside of the large inshore closure being proposed in order to pay their bills. The memorandum also recommends an inshore boundary line of 70 degrees west which reaches past the areas frequented by the inshore day boat fishery.

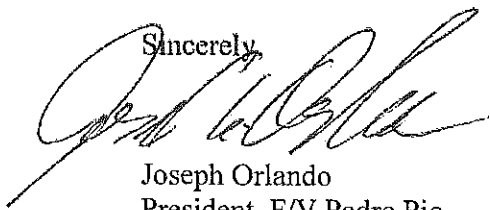
To be clear, NEFS 2 members are not in support of going beyond the low catch limits currently in place with additional seasonal closures in the Gulf of Maine or trip limits as proposed by MA DMF. We do not support an ACL split for GOM COD (GOM COD EAST / GOM COD WEST). Splitting the GOM Cod stock would put additional restriction on the inshore vessels that do not have the capability of fishing offshore in the GOM east of 70:15. Quotas have already been cut by 77% for this stock to further reduce their allocation by splitting the stock only serves to further devastate the inshore fleet. We also do not support using the 70:00 west as the coordinate to define fishing activity in the inshore GOM as now being considered by the New England Fishery Management Council. NEFS 2 members could support discussions related to discreet and dynamic spawning closures and using the 70:15 west to define fishing activity in the inshore GOM with a clear rationale and purpose that has the interest off all at heart not just a few.

NEFS 2 is sharing these ideas with our policy representative, the Northeast Seafood Coalition, and we are actively engaged in communications with fishermen in other Sectors in order to identify problems and viable solutions for measures to consider for the Gulf of Maine.

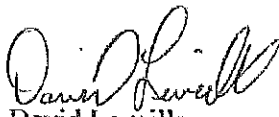
As you know, NEFS 2 worked closely with other sectors to develop the Gulf of Maine declaration which was implemented in the Sector Operations Plans in fishing year 2013 with the intent to closely monitor and track fishing activity west of the 70:15. The Gulf of Maine declaration deters vessels that normally fish offshore from fishing west of 70:15 without completely removing that right from them.

To conclude, our members are desperately trying to remain active members of the groundfish fishery. We recommend the Division take a more proactive and collaborative approach when recommending regulatory measures such as these and we urge MA DMF to work collaboratively with active ground fisherman that are trying to remain active. Unlike others that you may be hearing from, the majority of NEFS 2 members make their living groundfish fishing and do not have other fisheries to fall back on. NEFS 2 commercial fishermen seek new opportunities not further constraints for the struggling inshore active day boat fishery.

Sincerely,



Joseph Orlando
President, F/V Padre Pio
II Northeast Fishery Sector Inc.



David Leveille
Sector Manager
II Northeast Fishery Sector Inc.

Signing on behalf of the Board of Directors of II Northeast Fishery Sector Inc.

Albert Cottone, Treasure, F/V Sabrina Maria
Christine Sherman, Clerk, F/V Lady Jane
Giuseppe Randazzo, F/V Razzo
Vincenzo Russo, F/V Miss Trish
Thomas Testaverde, F/V Midnight Sun
Stefanie Noto, F/V Grace Marie
Paul Vitale, F/V Angela Rose
Joseph Jurek, F/V Mystique Lady

Cc: Dr. David Pierce, MA Division of Marine Fisheries
Terry Stockwell, Chairman, New England Fishery Management Council
Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council
Honorable Carolyn Kirk, City of Gloucester MA
State Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante
State Senator Bruce Tarr
Jackie Odell, Executive Director, Northeast Seafood Coalition