

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

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April 24, 2012

New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

RE: Scallop Committee Report for Council Meeting of April 24, 2012

Dear Council Members:

I am writing today to express my concerns about the possible research priorities to be considered and acted upon by the full Council with regard to the 2012 survey work of the scallop population. I would have preferred to attend personally given the importance of this topic but the Massachusetts House is in budget deliberations today for our next fiscal year. I hope you will accept and consider my written comments in the alternative.

I have had the opportunity to address the Council at various times in the past and appreciate the serious reflection which is used in your deliberations. Today's scallop research issue is an issue which merits the utmost caution about how you set priorities for this summer's work. As you know, the results of this season's survey of the scallop resource could determine future landing levels and what amount of effort is permitted in certain areas of the ocean. Future Framework consideration will also likely reflect the results and reports as to the health of the scallop population.

For that reason I strongly believe any suggestion that the Council undertakes the use of new (and untested) equipment and sampling protocols is simply inappropriate. I believe it would be wrong to consider the so-called "Habcam" for use this season since I understand that it is still not completely built, has received no testing whatsoever and would be using a wholly new sampling design which has undergone no peer review at all. In other words, marine resource information in an area where scientific credibility and accuracy should be unassailable could be left to new equipment with no performance record. I have no doubt that NMFS would never accept the results of research work done which has zero record of experience, reliability or working history. I am informed that at the Scallop Subcommittee

rec'd 4/24/12 Council Mtg.

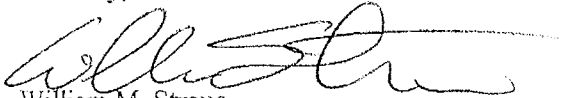
presentation no information was offered on what kind of quality control would be employed for use of the habcam during the 2012 season.

In short, it seems to me to border on recklessness, if not irresponsibility, for the Council to consider this survey technology during 2012 on a resource whose management over the last decade has been one of success both for the sustainability of the species and the waterfront communities who derive economic benefits from this fishery. I implore the Council to exercise caution, prudence and extreme care as your decisions today on the quality of science you endorse will affect so much for years to come. At the most, I could only see some value in permitting the habcam (assuming it is even fully built) to be deployed for limited survey work so that the equipment and the methodology surrounding it could later be evaluated by those in the marine science field.

The credibility of the Council's work depends upon the reliability and quality of the information upon which it is based. Please do not take any action today which is beneath that standard.

Thank you for your time and efforts in considering this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William M. Straus', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William M. Straus
State Representative