

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

April 24, 2012

The Honorable Sam Rauch
Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

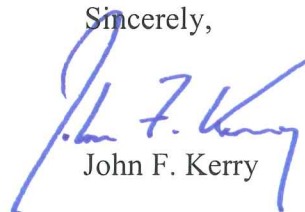
Dear Acting Assistant Administrator Rauch:

It is my understanding that the depletion of large numbers of scallops in the Mid-Atlantic and the poor recruitment observed from 2009 to 2011 could lead to a rapid reduction of the resource. The surveys this year will be critical for a United States industry that was valued at \$455 million in 2010. Accordingly, it is vital this year for emphasis to be placed on scientifically reviewed surveys and protocols as well as timely data processing, presentation and review. Every effort must be made to identify small scallops and determine if there is a recruiting event.

I understand that the NMFS is proposing two new protocols for its summer scallop survey. Given that the industry is facing a potentially drastic reduction in abundance and corresponding reduction in landings, I don't believe that this is the best time to change assessment methodology, particularly when the industry has expressed deep trust in the current survey with SMAST as the centerpiece. As you know, we have previously urged the National Marine Fisheries Service to improve the quality of its stock assessments and to take tangible steps to collaborate with local stakeholders. In contrast to the ground fish assessments, which have been constantly questioned by fishermen, the SMAST scallop program has enjoyed a highly cooperative and trusting relationship with the scallop industry. It is the only consistently reviewed survey that bridges the NMFS Albatross dredge survey and the proposed new protocols. I believe this is a model that should be applauded, emulated and most importantly, supported. I ask that you provide your support for this survey and ensure that a pathway for immediate action through the Council is made available to mitigate negative impacts should the survey show a decline in recruitment.

As always, thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry

Cc: New England Fishery Management Council