

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

April 25, 2013

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our strong support for three specific actions to mitigate the impact of looming reductions to the allowable harvest of groundfish in New England waters for the 2013 fishing season. It is clear that factors such as limited scientific data, inadequate stock assessments, and the effects of climate change on the ocean have severely complicated an already difficult situation and that significant resources will be required to rebuild this fishery. While we remain hopeful that our colleagues in Congress will continue working with us to pass legislation to provide disaster relief, reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), and improve scientific fishery research, we believe the government must also take more immediate action.

Key groundfish stocks have not recovered despite the fishing industry's strict adherence to reduced catch allocation limits. The projected groundfish catch reduction regulations for the upcoming fishing year will likely have a devastating impact on our fishing families and our coastal communities. In fact, some species catch allocations may be cut by nearly eighty percent. We believe that the Magnuson Stevens Act provides flexibility to address challenging circumstances such as this, and we ask that you give your fullest consideration to all available approaches. Specifically, we request that the Department of Commerce reevaluate its authority under Magnuson-Stevens (MSA) and issue a second "interim measure" to reduce, but not end overfishing in fishing year 2013. Fishermen in the Northeast Multispecies Fishery desperately need a higher allocation of fish in order to maintain the viability of their businesses and we urge you to reevaluate the Department's analysis of MSA and issue an interim measure to increase the fishing allocation. We believe that it's important to note that the industry strongly supports an interim measure that will substantially reduce their fishing allocations in 2013, but at an amount that allows the business to remain in operation. We believe their proposal strikes the proper balance of protecting the resource while also protecting their way of life.

We thank you for taking the unprecedented step of declaring an economic disaster for the groundfish fishery before the fishing season has even started. This decision demonstrates how dire the situation has become for New England's fishermen, and it foreshadows the severe economic hardship for coastal communities unless we act. In particular, we are concerned about our small boat fishermen, who are the core of our most important fishing communities and who depend upon species like cod and haddock in the near shore waters of the Gulf of Maine. For our part, the Senate has supported emergency appropriations to provide millions of dollars in immediate relief for fishing families and to improve the long term sustainability of fisheries. As

you know, the Senate version of the Disaster Assistance Supplemental Appropriations bill included \$150 million for these disasters across the country, but regrettably the House Republicans blocked this critical funding and the final version of this bill approved by Congress included only \$5 million in fisheries funding limited to Superstorm Sandy impacts. Therefore, we reiterate our call for you to submit a budget amendment for Fiscal Year 2013 to provide emergency funding for fisheries disasters that were declared in 2012. We believe that it is the responsibility of the Administration, after declaring these disasters, to request the funding to respond to them. Fishermen simply cannot wait for another funding cycle for help to arrive.

Additionally, we ask NOAA Fisheries to reconsider the impact of further burdening our fishermen with at-sea monitoring costs and fully commit to providing the necessary funding to continue wholly covering these compliance costs. Even without the drastic reductions in catch limits, our small boat fishermen cannot feasibly afford to pay for at-sea monitors. It is vital that NOAA provide full funding to cover these costs. NOAA Fisheries must also move to rapidly and effectively implement virtual monitoring and other measures to further reduce the long term costs of monitoring.

We remain committed to preserving this historic way of life, and we believe that such decisive actions by the administration would provide much needed relief to already overburdened fishermen and fishing communities in Massachusetts. Thank you for your attention and your continued support for improving conditions for the fishermen.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth A. Warren  
U.S. Senator



William "Mo" Cowan  
U.S. Senator