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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

August 13, 2012

The Honorable Rebecca Blank
Acting Secretary
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Acting Secretary Blank:

I am writing to urgently request that the Department of Commerce take immediate action on the Commonwealth's November 2011 renewed disaster request for direct economic relief for the Massachusetts groundfish fleet. At that time, the Commonwealth documented significant financial losses and dramatic consolidation in the Massachusetts-based groundfish fleet and NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco promised rapid evaluation of my request. Now, the need for a disaster declaration is more critical than ever given the recent preliminary report from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) forecasting potentially devastating cuts to the New England groundfishery in 2013.

NMFS' preliminary numbers suggest groundfish cuts between 43 to 73 percent across multiple stocks, putting the very viability of the historic and economically vital New England fishing fleet at risk. We must take immediate action to prevent a massive consolidation of the fleet and to protect the thousands of fishermen and their families who depend on this industry for their livelihood.

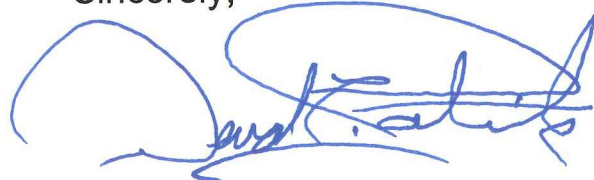
I ask for your leadership now to utilize the authority granted under the Magnuson-Stevenson Act to declare a disaster declaration for the groundfishery so that direct economic relief can be provided to fishermen in Massachusetts. I also urge you to act quickly to ensure that relief is available before any potential cuts in allocation are implemented next year. Without this advance and proactive action, I fear for the viability of our fleet, and the communities and shore-side businesses that depend on the industry.

In addition, it is now clear that this resource disaster is not the fault of our fishermen who have been following the federal fisheries management plans, and I urge you to continue to improve fisheries science to allow for more accurate fisheries management decisions in the future.

Much as the federal government rightly comes to the aid of America's farmers during times of crisis, so too must the federal government support fishermen, who are working hard to put nutritious food on the table of Americans, during this crisis.

I look forward to working with you, fishermen, the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, and the New England Fishery Management Council on this important challenge, and I stand ready to assist you to ensure our fishermen are provided the economic relief they so desperately need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Rebecca Blank", written in a cursive style.

The Honorable Rebecca Blank, Acting Secretary

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Cc: Senator John Kerry
Senator Scott Brown
Representative Michael Capuano
Representative Barney Frank
Representative Bill Keating
Representative Stephen Lynch
Representative John Tierney
Commerce Undersecretary Jane Lubchenco
Commerce Assistant Secretary Eric Schwaab
NMFS Administrator Sam Rauch
NERO Regional Director John Bullard
NEFMC Chairman Rip Cunningham
Secretary Rick Sullivan, Energy and Environmental Affairs
Assistant Secretary Bill White, Energy and Environmental Affairs
Commissioner Mary Griffin, Department of Fish and Game
Director Paul Diodati, Division of Marine Fisheries