

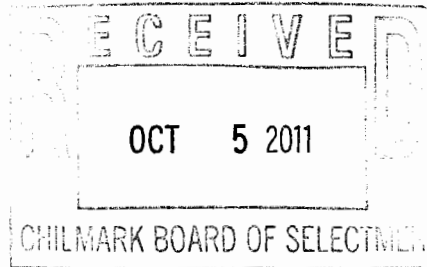


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October 3, 2011



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Senator Mark Begich, Chair
Senate subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard
111 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Field Hearing to Review Massachusetts Fishery Management Plans

Dear Senator Begich:

Thank you for coming to the State House and also for the opportunity to submit testimony to your committee on this most important matter. As the Massachusetts State Senator representing the Cape and Islands, I believe that the successful management of our fisheries, which is a time honored industry, presents us with a unique challenge and also the opportunity for immeasurable success for our constituents.

As the fishing industry continues to evolve and change, regulations and management are essential. This is especially important given the improving technology for monitoring catches and the long-term declines in many stocks. I believe that the government's role includes encouraging and protecting independent fishingpeople so that the industry remains an economic and cultural wellspring in our coastal towns. In my district, as in many others, our fishing community helps to keep our communities strong and diversified and therefore protecting it is of utmost importance.

In that context, it is important for the committee to focus on two prominent issues in New England's commercial fisheries: enforcement and management.

I encourage the committee to adhere to the goal of community-based fisheries and to adopt the recommendations outlined in the Touchstone Report. This recent independent review of the work and coordination among the three entities responsible for fisheries management: the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the New England Fishery Management Council includes the following recommendations, that I believe will help promote a more sustainable future for such a vital industry to the Commonwealth:

- Improve communication between the three agencies to reduce redundancy.
- Eliminate unnecessary expenses, as well as unnecessary regulation.
- Develop and use data that has industry credibility as the basis for sound management decisions.

- Define clear criteria for measuring the success of those decisions.

As you know, the process of making and revising regulations for New England's fishing industry has been contentious since its beginning. As managers work together to find ways to meet the legal mandates of fisheries law, efforts have been made to provide incentives and flexibility for more local-level decisionmaking and innovation. Such wholesale transitions, while never unanimously supported, have become necessary given the poor conditions of many stocks and the failure of the previous days-at-sea system.

I also implore the Committee to identify revisions to the new groundfish regulations to improve its performance, leading both to the rebuilding of our marine resources and more grassroots profitability for fishing businesses. In the long term, the implementation of many of the recommendations of the Touchstone Report will create a more responsive, streamlined management process, and allow for better management decisions going forward.

The health of our marine resources and the success of our fisheries depend on fair but rigorous enforcement of mutually agreed upon rules. There have been egregious and apparently systemic abuses in the enforcement of fisheries rules and those responsible must be held fully accountable under guidelines that are clearly articulated and understood on both sides. This is the first step toward rebuilding trust between enforcement officers and the commercial fishing industry, and it is essential to a healthy future of the industry.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony to the committee on this most important issue. I encourage you to continue this open and collaborative process. Please feel free to contact me with any comments or questions.

Sincerely,



Daniel A. Wolf
State Senator
Cape and Islands District

CC:

Senator John Kerry
Senator Scott Brown
Congressman Barney Frank
Congressman John Tierney
Congressman William Keating
Senator Olympia Snowe
MA State Representative Sarah Peake MA
State Representative Timothy Madden
Tom Dempsey, Council Member, New England Fishery Management Council
John Pappalardo, Chief Executive Officer of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fisherman's Association
Selectman Warren Doty – Town of Chilmark, Board of Selectman