

January 24, 2011

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

We write to thank you for your final decision to deny the request to increase quotas for New England groundfish through emergency action. We appreciate the attention and thoughtful consideration that you, your staff and the leadership of NOAA and NMFS have exercised in making your finding of insufficient new scientific or economic data for an emergency ruling. We hope the Governor brings the issues he has identified to the Council's attention later this month so that an appropriate record can be developed. We also appreciate Administrator Schwaab's generous offer to continue to work with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to improve the health of our fish populations.

We note with regret the highly-charged and polarized political context around federal fisheries management in New England, and the particularly unfortunate tone that has been injected into this important civic discourse. We appreciate the professional demeanor and objective consideration of the issues that NOAA and NMFS staffs have displayed throughout this process. It is our hope, and will be our practice, to continue to work toward establishing a culture of debate and discussion on fisheries policy that is based on respect and a common desire to seek lasting science-based solutions.

We must all continue to work toward building the trust, the scientific credibility, and the economic stability on which the health of our Nation's fisheries depend. We appreciate the commitment you and your senior management team have made to this same objective and look forward to working together with you on that goal.

Thank you again for your sound and thoughtful resolution of this matter.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Brooks, PhD
Vice President and Ocean Program Director
Conservation Law Foundation

Lee Crockett
Director, Federal Fisheries Policy
Pew Environment Group

Ben Wright
Advocate
Environment Massachusetts

Michael Gravitz
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Rob Moir
President and Executive Director
Ocean River Institute

CC: NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco
NOAA Assistant Administrator Eric Schwaab