



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
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DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

MAEVE VALLELY BARTLETT
SECRETARY

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July 15, 2014

Assistant Administrator Eileen Sobeck
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: New England Groundfish Disaster Aid

Dear Assistant Administrator Sobeck:

Over the last four years Governor Patrick has supported federal disaster aid for the Commonwealth's groundfishermen. Since 2010 it has been clear that the men and women of our New England fishing communities have been weathering a crisis that has seen their revenue from groundfish harvests plummet despite adhering to federal catch limits. I applauded the Secretary of Commerce's September 2012 decision to declare a federal fishery disaster ahead of the drastic catch limit reductions in fishing year 2013 and our Congressional Delegation's support in securing federal fisheries disaster funding to aid our groundfishermen in February of this year. Yet nearly two years since the original declaration, and months since Congress appropriated funding, our fishermen are still awaiting distribution of these critically needed funds.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is poised to act and begin the process of distributing funds for prequalified permit holders for Phase I direct aid. Concurrently, the Commonwealth is proceeding with an open and transparent public process to develop a Phase II state spending plan. I urge you to expedite review of the Commonwealth's Phase I direct aid so that we may distribute aid to impacted permit holders as soon as possible. Fishermen started a new fishing year over two months ago, and with that new year came new business decisions about fishing-related obligations. Our fishermen need this funding to offset declines in groundfish revenues due to deep catch limit reductions and to make investments to ensure their businesses survive this fishing year and into the future.

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Your leadership is needed to support New England's historic groundfishery. We look forward to working cooperatively with NOAA Fisheries to disburse of this critical direct aid as quickly as possible to our groundfishermen. Thank you for your continued partnership and I respectfully request you undertake expedited review of our grant proposal.

Sincerely,



Maeve Vallely Bartlett
Secretary

cc: Massachusetts U.S. Congressional Delegation
Massachusetts Senate President Therese Murray
Massachusetts Senator Bruce Tarr
Massachusetts Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo
Massachusetts Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Mayor Carolyn Kirk, City of Gloucester
Mayor Jon Mitchell, City of New Bedford
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and
NOAA Administrator Dr. Kathryn Sullivan
NOAA Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, John Bullard
Terry Stockwell, Chair NEFMC
Tom Nies, Executive Director, NEFMC
Commissioner Mary Griffin, MA Dept. of Fish and Game
Director Paul Diodati, MA Division of Marine Fisheries