



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

STEPHEN R. CANESSA
Representative
12th Bristol District

Freetown, Lakeville, Middleboro,
New Bedford and Taunton

COMMITTEES:
Transportation
Education
Mental Health & Substance Abuse

State House, Room 443
(617) 722-2460 (Office)
(617) 626-0839 (Fax)
Rep.StephenCanessa@hou.state.ma.us

August 3, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama,
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am writing to you from the seaport city of New Bedford, Massachusetts, in regards to the new 'catch share' fishing policy promulgated by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the process through which this policy was enforced.

Here along the coast of Massachusetts, fishing is more than a commercial venture or a job; for many families, it is a way of life - embedded in our local history & culture and vital to our region's future. Historically, as the 'whaling capital of the world', New Bedford was the wealthiest city in the nation and served as a major energy-supplier for our country. Portuguese fishermen from the Azores, expert freedman blacksmiths, and Hawaiian islanders worked side-by-side daily for Quaker sea captains. In fact, this early multicultural intensity of the New Bedford waterfront was captured in the opening scenes of Herman Melville's classic novel, *Moby Dick*.

When petroleum was discovered and became a more efficient and cheaper alternative to whale oil, our fishermen adapted. They turned their tremendous expertise at sea to commercial fishing and New Bedford quickly became a hugely successful commercial seaport. Simply put, the fishermen of Massachusetts understand the symbiotic relationship between man and the sea, and respect the balance that must be maintained between the two. It is a dynamic that will not and cannot be categorized solely by varying scientific studies.

The 'catch share' policy was initiated with, what we hope, were the best of intentions to monitor and control fish populations. However, throughout the process, the very real-world concerns and suggestions of the New England fishing industry were either not requested or outright dismissed as irrelevant by many officials in NOAA who were charged with creating the new policy.

Our congressman, Representative Barney Frank, understands this issue as well, if not better, than any other governmental official. From the beginning, he has been a tremendous advocate for the New England fishing industry. His unwavering support, as well as the ceaseless efforts of our entire federal delegation, Governor Patrick, and our local & state-level officials, has been instrumental in bringing attention to the concerns of commercial fishermen; however, despite the efforts on land - at sea, the new policies have created a damaging situation for our fishing fleet which threatens to undermine the community-based nature of the New England fishing industry.

The level of contempt and animosity that many fishermen feel towards NOAA is deep and not likely to alter without a game-changing effort to reengage in constructive dialogue. For the sake of a thriving New England fishing industry, this adversarial and unproductive relationship cannot be allowed to continue.

With that in mind, I would invite you to join our entire delegation and visit New Bedford, MA, to personally meet with the hardworking and dedicated fishermen from across our state and New England who would like to share their stories and their challenges with you.

I realize that you have tremendous demands on your time. However, it is my understanding that you will be on Martha's Vineyard in August. New Bedford is home to a one-hour 'fast ferry' to the island and is often a day-trip for vacationing families on the Vineyard. Along with being the #1 commercial fishing seaport in the United States, New Bedford is also home to the Whaling National Historical Park, the Ocean Explorium, and the best Portuguese cuisine in the country.

Your engagement and interest in the professional opinions of the New England fishermen could set a new tone for discussion and help bridge the gap between the industry and NOAA. Here, you will be introduced to fishermen who know and respect the sea and who have always understood that their livelihoods are tied to maintaining the balance between man and nature.

I acknowledge that perhaps I am reaching far above my elected position, but these fishermen are a considerable part of my constituency and I would feel remiss in my duties as a public servant if I did not do all that I could to address their concerns – including reaching out to you.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration of this request. I would look forward to the opportunity to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Stephen R. Canessa
State Representative, 12th Bristol District
Freetown, Lakeville, Middleboro, New Bedford, and Taunton

cc: Congressman Barney Frank
Governor Deval Patrick