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PRESS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MASSACHUSETTS LAWMAKERS TO HOLD MARCH TO PROTEST "UNFAIR FISHERY ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES"

FEDERAL INSPECTOR GENERAL TEAM ARRIVES IN MASSACHUSETTS

NORTH CAROLINA LAWMAKERS SAY, "ALLEGATIONS...ARE BY NO MEANS ISOLATED TO THE NORTHEAST"

GLOUCESTER, MA (July 8, 2009) - Two state representatives and the Mayor of Gloucester, Massachusetts will hold a march and vigil this evening in "protest of the overreaching and heavy handed practices of the Office of NOAA General Counsel and Enforcement Division of the National Marine Fisheries Service," according to the lawmakers' prepared statement. "In recent months, the (Massachusetts) state Legislature and Attorney General Martha Coakley have questioned and criticized these practices. In response, the (Massachusetts congressional) delegation requested an Inspector General's investigation of allegations made by the fishing industry, which was granted last month."

The organizers are State Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante, D-Gloucester, State Sen. Bruce Tarr, R-Gloucester and Mayor Carolyn Kirk

As part of the on-going investigation into enforcement practices, a team of five members of the Commerce Department Inspector General's Washington D.C. office arrived in Massachusetts this week to begin private interviews with fishermen and others connected with the industry.

The vigil is slated to begin at City Hall, with a march to the Fishermen's Memorial Man at the Wheel on Stacy Boulevard. The event is being organized as a community statement against "unfair fishery enforcement practices," according to a joint statement issued by Ferrante, Tarr and Kirk.

A charter bus from Rhode Island will transport fishermen from southern New England to the event.

For more information: <http://www.savingseafood.org/fishing-industry-alerts/gloucester-fishing-industry-march-and-vigil-wednesday-7-2.html>

Background

On May 1st, Both Massachusetts senators and three congressmen (Barney Frank, John Tierney, William Delahunt) who represent the state's fishing communities asked for an investigation into allegations of "excessive penalties and retaliatory actions" by Gloucester-based federal fishery law enforcers against unnamed interests. On June 3, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, the Obama Administration's NOAA Administrator agreed to request the investigation.

Congressional request:

<http://www.savingseafood.org/in-congress/two-senators-and-three-congressman-request-nmfs-enforcement-3.html>

Administration response: <http://www.savingseafood.org/fishing-industry-alerts/noaa-chief-requests-investigation-of-enforce-2.html>

Inspector General's reply: <http://www.savingseafood.org/enforcement/inspector-general-response-to-lubchenco-request-for-enforcement-in-2.html>

North Carolina Joins Complaint

Last week, in response to the concerns raised by North Carolina state legislators, nine members of the North Carolina congressional delegation, led by Congressman Walter Jones and Senators Richard Burr and Kay Hagan, thanked NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco for her commitment to Massachusetts congressmen and senators "to request an Inspector General review of NOAA's commercial fishing industry enforcement practices" and told her that the "'allegations of excessive penalties and retaliatory actions by the Office of Law Enforcement' are by no means isolated to the Northeast".

The senators and congressional representatives stated that the Coast Guard Administrative Law Judge court system "warrants consideration" as evidenced by the "97% success rate" of Coast Guard Prosecutors. "Faced with the near certain odds of a guilty verdict and a steep penalty, innocent fishermen may have little choice but to settle, even if settling will do great damage to their reputation, their career and their ability to provide for their family."

For more information and copies of the letters:

<http://www.savingseafood.org/enforcement/north-carolina-state-and-federal-legislators-join-enforcement-chorus-of-comp-2.html>

Event Details

What: Vigil and march in support of the fishing industry.

Who: Led by state Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante, state Sen. Bruce Tarr, Mayor Carolyn Kirk. Entire community welcome to participate.

When: Wednesday July 8, 2009, starting at 7 p.m.

Where: Vigil at Gloucester City Hall, followed by march to and brief speaking program at the Gloucester Memorial "Man at the Wheel" statue, Stacy Boulevard.

Rain location: The vigil and program will be held in City Hall's Kyrouz Auditorium.