



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

February 2, 2007

The Honorable Deval Patrick, Governor
Office of the Governor
State House
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Governor Patrick:

We are writing to seek your assistance on behalf of the Commonwealth's commercial fishing industry due to the severe economic hardships currently being experienced by our fishing families and coastal communities. A progression of changes to the federal groundfish management plan has created the need for a declaration of economic disaster, and we are seeking your action in making the request for that declaration.

Beginning in 1994, Amendments 5, 7, and 13 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan have over time significantly reduced the area in which Massachusetts vessels have to fish and the number of days in which they have the opportunity to fish. Most recently, Framework 42, which was implemented on November 22, 2006, has effectively reduced the available fishing days of the inshore fleet by 50%.

On Monday, December 12, the Massachusetts Fisheries Recovery Commission released an economic impact report that documents the harm being suffered by our fishing families, ports and the Commonwealth in general.

Among the most illustrative points of the report, by economists Brett Baden and Marcelo Bianconi, is the loss of over \$16 million in combined revenue per month in the communities of Gloucester, Plymouth, Rockport and New Bedford since the implementation of Amendment 13 in 2004.

Importantly, history has demonstrated that the federal government will respond to severe stresses on the fishing industry. Since 1997, there have been at least five occasions when Congress appropriated funds for economic assistance to fishing communities due to natural disasters or the impact of regulations.

In this case, the threatened survival of the Commonwealth's inshore fishing fleet warrants the recognition and potential resources that a disaster declaration would provide.

In turn, a declaration would set the stage for needed financial assistance from a Congressional appropriation.

For Massachusetts to qualify for disaster relief, a commercial fishery failure must be caused by a fishery resource disaster due to natural or undetermined causes, or man-made impacts beyond the ability of fisheries managers to mitigate. Whether or not one or more of these conditions exist is determined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA).

Considerations in this determination include the size and value of the fishery as well as economic and landings data. Also considered are community impacts, the degree of dependence on alternative fishing opportunities, decline in a fishery resource, and other environmental data.

Determinations of disaster and the need for relief are made on a case-specific basis rather than through a standard set of criteria.

Your action is necessary to initiate this process through a formal request to Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez. This request should then trigger an investigation by NOAA.

Should Congress subsequently appropriate funds for disaster relief, then the MSA requires that these funds be used in ways that are “. . . appropriate to restore the fishery or prevent a similar failure in the future and to assist a fishing community affected by such failure.” In turn, disaster assistance should provide short-term relief while assisting long-term sustainability.

Congress most recently appropriated funds for economic assistance relative to the New England groundfishery in fiscal year 2002. In that case, some \$11 million were appropriated, and employed to mitigate the effects of federal closures and restrictions upon both fishing families and communities.

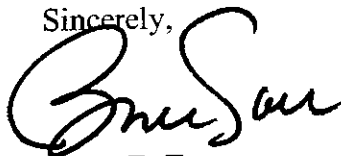
Similar assistance could play an instrumental role in promoting the survival of the Massachusetts groundfishery through the extreme hardships being caused by Framework 42.

We believe that sufficient data and information are available to make a compelling case to the federal government for needed relief in the pivotal time for our fishing families and communities. We pledge our assistance in building and presenting that case.

This request was first formally made to former Governor Mitt Romney, but with the closing of his administration the disaster assistance request was not acted upon.

Thank you for your attention to this request, and please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Sincerely,



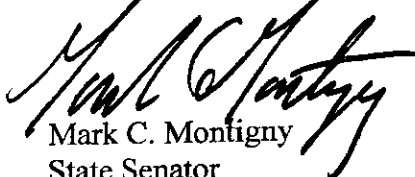
Bruce E. Tarr
State Senator
1st Essex and Middlesex



Robert L. Hedlund
State Senator
Plymouth and Norfolk



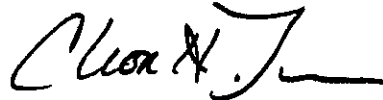
Pamela P. Resor
State Senator
Middlesex and Worcester



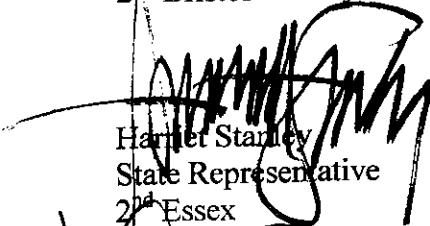
Mark C. Montigny
State Senator
2nd Bristol and Plymouth



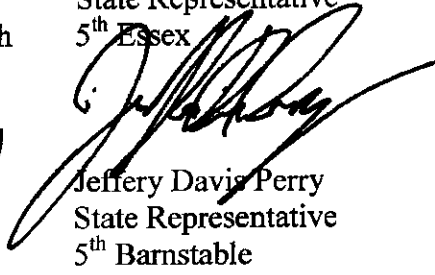
Anthony J. Verga
State Representative
5th Essex



Cleon H. Turner
State Representative
1st Barnstable



Harriet Stanley
State Representative
2nd Essex



Jeffery Davis Perry
State Representative
5th Barnstable



Robert M. Koczera
State Representative
11th Bristol



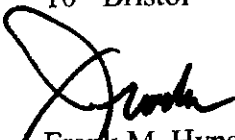
William M. Straus
State Representative
10th Bristol




Matthew Patrick
State Representative
3rd Barnstable



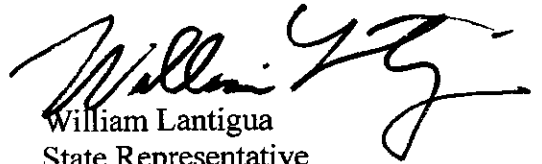
George N. Peterson, Jr.
State Representative
9th Worcester



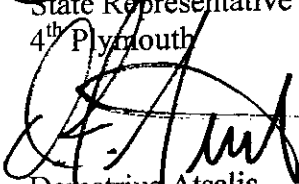
Frank M. Hynes
State Representative
4th Plymouth



Peter V. Kocot
State Representative
1st Hampshire



William Lantigua
State Representative
16th Essex



Demetrius Atsalis
State Representative
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Douglas W. Petersen
State Representative
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John Bell
Mayor of Gloucester



Susan Williams Gifford
State Representative
2nd Plymouth



John D. Keenan
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