

NORTHEAST SEAFOOD COALITION

June 11, 2010

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

Dear Mr. President:

We are the directors of the Northeast Seafood Coalition (NSC), an organization of commercial fishing businesses in the northeast United States. NSC members are small, independent, entrepreneurial businesses that fish for – and support fishing for – cod, haddock, flounders, and other groundfish species along the northeast coast. NSC's mission is to work for the long term health of fishery resources, fishing communities, and the fishing industry. Since 2002, NSC has worked through public processes in attempts to help develop rules to rebuild the northeast groundfish fishery. NSC opposes overfishing.

On May 1, 2010, a major revision of the rebuilding rules for the northeast multispecies (groundfish) fishery was issued by the Fisheries Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries) in the U.S. Department of Commerce. These rules institute a widespread system of "catch shares" for the groundfish fishery while, at the same time, prescribing very low annual catch limits on many key stocks. (The catch share system was instituted with neither the analyses nor protections required of "limited access privilege" programs in federal fisheries, 16 U.S.C.1853a.)

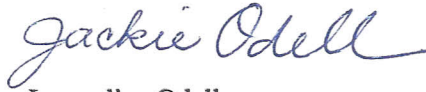
These rebuilding rules will collapse many of the businesses that fish for groundfish from ports along the northeast coast and will scrap jobs in the region. They will cause a major consolidation of the industry. They expose the fishery to speculators and invite takeover of the fishery by non-local, non-fishing interests. Over time, the rules will raze fishing infrastructure and rob coastal communities of their economies, identities, and histories.

Rebuilding rules should not – and need not – destroy the fishery to rebuild the fish. Federal estimates indicate that a rebuilt northeast groundfish fishery will, over time, support a sustainable, conservative catch of about 304 million pounds annually, or over four times current commercial landings (66 million pounds, in 2008). *Rebuilding rules should support the small businesses, infrastructure, and communities that form a key part of the fishery.* We are fully confident that there are solutions to the challenge of rebuilding fish populations while sustaining businesses, communities, and infrastructure.

We are eager and ready to share our solutions for rebuilding fish populations without destroying fisheries. We invite you to visit with us and other industry members this summer in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the oldest fishing port in the nation (and our headquarters). We would like to show you our way of life, and to offer our concrete solutions to the rebuilding challenge. We turn directly to you in this matter because officials in the Commerce Department have failed to understand the reality and gravity of the challenge upon us. We also ask that you direct the Secretary of Commerce, who oversees NOAA Fisheries, to work collaboratively with us to implement concrete solutions to avert the unnecessary collapse of the groundfish industry. Time is of the essence; many groundfish businesses predict that they will be unable to continue operating beyond August 2010.

NORTHEAST SEAFOOD COALITION

On behalf of the Board of Directors, NSC,



Jacqueline Odell
Executive Director, NSC

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