

The Seafood Coalition

"The voice of the U.S. commercial fishing industry"

November 12, 2010

Long Island Commercial Fishing
Association
Bonnie Brady

Southeastern Fisheries
Association
Bob Jones

Southern Offshore Fishermen's
Association
Bob Spaeth

Coos Bay Trawlers
Steve Bodnar

Lund's Fisheries
Jeff Reichle

NC Fisheries Association
Sean McKeon

Sustainable Fisheries Coalition
Jeff Kaelin

Directed Sustainable Fisheries
Rusty Hudson

Western Fishboat Owners
Association
Wayne Heikkila

West Coast Seafood Processors
Association
Rod Moore

Fishermen's Marketing
Association
Peter Leipzig

Organized Fishermen of Florida
Jerry Sansom

Oregon Trawl Commission
Brad Pettinger

United Catcher Boats
Brent Paine

American Alliance of Fishermen
and their Communities
Tina Jackson

Pacific Seafood Processors
Association
Dennis Phelan

At-sea Processors Association
Jim Gilmore

Pacific Whiting Conservation
Cooperative
Dan Waldeck

Fisheries Survival Fund
Shaun Gehan

Garden State Seafood
Association
Greg DiDomenico

Southeastern Fisheries
Association - East Coast
Fisheries Section
Jimmy Hull

Fishermen's Dock Cooperative
Jim Lovgren

Monkfish Defense Fund
Marc Agger

Alliance of Communities for
Sustainable Fisheries
Kathy Fosmark

Viking Village
Ernie Panacek

Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

As members of the oldest industry in the United States – the commercial fishing industry – we are pleased by your announced intent to conduct a national fisheries science workshop. The continued good health and productivity of the resources we harvest to supply nutritious food to our nation depends on using the best scientific information available. Many of us help develop that information by engaging in cooperative research, providing data, participating in peer reviews, and being involved in the regional fishery management council process.

While we strongly support having a national fisheries science workshop, we are concerned that it be meaningful and yield products that the seafood industry can embrace. To make this happen, it is imperative that the commercial seafood industry be involved from the very beginning. Holding a workshop whose agenda is established and directed in-house or with the help of privately-funded special interest groups does nothing to enhance the Department's credibility or to provide scientific leadership. Filling a workshop with participants who are chosen based on political loyalty has the same negative effect.

We urge you to direct your staff to have the workshop developed and conducted by a credible independent science organization such as the School of Marine Science and Technology at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, the School of Aquatic and Fisheries Science at the University of Washington or another which is acceptable to independent fishermen to avoid questions of conflict or politicization of science. That organization should consult with as many as possible stakeholder groups in establishing the agenda and selecting participants; at a minimum, contact should be made with representative commercial fishing and processing groups in all eight Council regions and the east coast / Gulf of Mexico highly migratory species fisheries. Participation should also be broad, acknowledging the diverse regional nature of scientific information and the effect that lack of science has on the conduct of commercial fisheries.

We are ready and willing to work with you and your staff on what we agree is an important effort to ensure that not only the best, but truly adequate scientific information is available for the conservation and management of our nation's fisheries.

Sincerely,



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The Seafood Coalition member organizations that have signed on to this letter, listed on the left, represent harvesters of well over half of the edible fish and shellfish taken from U.S. waters each year.