

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 15, 2011

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
Room 5421
Fourteenth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

The fishing industry is a crucial part of our nation's economy, but in these tough economic times too many fishermen are struggling to provide for themselves, their families, and their communities. We write to express our concern that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) catch share policy will further endanger the economic vitality of the already-struggling fishing industry and will not end overfishing, and to urge NOAA to consider other well-established fishery management techniques.

We are specifically concerned that NOAA has committed significant funding to encourage the adoption of catch share programs when it has not committed sufficient funds to adequately assess the stocks of our nation's fisheries. The Magnuson-Stevens Act expressly calls on NOAA to assess the health of fishing stocks, but NOAA has not committed significant funding to fulfill this requirement. NOAA should first commit funding to carry out this important duty before providing funding for a new fishery-management tool that requires – and currently does not have – broad-based support from the fishing industry.


We believe the adoption of a catch share program could further reduce the ability of fishermen to generate revenue because success in fishing has traditionally depended upon the ability to choose among various fisheries as conditions warrant. Such flexibility may be lost if a significant number of fisheries are regulated by catch share programs.

Finally, we believe catch share programs could deter future generations' interest in becoming fishermen. Catch share programs increase capital expenditures and raise the barriers of entering the business, which discourage young people from considering a career in the fishing industry.


The recreational and commercial fishing industries generate billions of dollars each year and are central to America's history and culture. Honest fishermen work very hard to make a living in our states every day. For them and for our economy, we must institute fishery management tools that enhance the industry's vitality, not diminish it. We hope that you carefully consider our concerns and, when appropriate, encourage the use of proven fishery management tools.

Respectfully,


Kay R. Hagan
United States Senator


Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator


Scott Brown
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator


Walter Jones
Member of Congress


Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress


Barney Frank
Member of Congress


Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress


Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress