

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Steve Levy
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

February 23, 2011

Patricia Kirkul, Northeast Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Re: Scoping comments on Amendment 6 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan

Dear Ms. Kirkul:

As the highest elected official in Suffolk County, which has more than 1.5 million residents, it is with great concern that I write on behalf of those residents involved in the County's commercial fishing industry.

I am sure you are aware of the efforts to jumpstart the weakened economy, of which retaining – and adding - jobs is one of the priorities. Every job in Suffolk is an important one and fishery management determinations that could cause job loss cannot be made without weighing the impact of all options.

Suffolk County's fishing industries continue to bow under increasing pressure from regulatory agencies. Unfortunately, with the proposed implementation of a catch shares program, Suffolk's monkfish fishery is no exception.

The monkfish fishery is one of many commercial fishing outlets in Suffolk contributing millions of dollars and creating hundreds of jobs for the County's economy. No less important, fishing of all kinds represents a significant thread in the socio-economic history of the County, from the former whaling docks in Sag Harbor to the current commercial docks in Montauk and Shinnecock.

To date, Suffolk's monkfish fishery has been subject to, and has followed, the Days at Sea (DAS) management system with much success in terms of catch and fishery sustainability. For more than five years, stock assessments for monkfish have shown to be on the positive side of the species rebuilding schedule.

As a result, the monkfish industry has great concern over the proposed implementation of a catch shares program as a fishery management tool for monkfish. There is the fear this will result in a rapid consolidation of the commercial fishing fleet, resulting in fewer fishermen and a loss of the economic multipliers associated with the maintenance of a healthy fishing fleet.

Every regulation that has been implemented at the state and federal levels of government on the fishing industry is another burden that a weakening industry has to carry. Suffolk's commercial fishing

industries are fighting for survival and cannot afford to have any facet adapt to a new management plan, especially when the current plan is working.

Implementing a catch shares management program will likely result in further shrinkage of the Suffolk's fishing industry. This industry already follows the current regulations related to catch limits and bears the cost of updating equipment, all while battling ever increasing fuel prices and diminishing returns.

The fishing industry in Suffolk is not only a mainstay of the local economy, it is an important part of its heritage. I strongly urge that the DAS management program be maintained for the monkfish fishery in Southern New England waters.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Steve Levy
County Executive of Suffolk County

cc: Senator Charles Schumer
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Congressman Timothy Bishop
NYS Senator Ken LaValle
NYS Assemblyman Fred Thiele
ASMFC Fishery Management Plan Coordinator Toni Kerns
NYDEC Marine Bureau Chief Jim Gilmore
NOAA Fisheries North East Regional Administrator Patricia Kurkul

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