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February 10, 2012

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

Thank you for your recent letter on the Gulf of Maine cod assessment. As Governor Patrick wrote last month, cod is an essential part of the Massachusetts groundfishery and any change in its abundance and allocation will have tremendous economic impacts on the livelihoods of hundreds of Massachusetts fishermen and their families.

The Commonwealth appreciates Secretary Bryson's willingness to consider implementing an interim and emergency Gulf of Maine cod catch limit for the coming year. Last week, after a discussion among New England Fisheries Management Council members, state fishery experts, and the fishing community, the Council recommended a reduction in cod catch limits of between 6,700 and 7,500 metric tons, or approximately a 12 percent to 22 percent from 2011 levels. Given the potential for uncertainty in the stock assessment and the weakened economic state for many of our fishermen since the implementation of catch shares in 2010, I urge the Department of Commerce to adopt a 2012 interim management action for Gulf of Maine cod that maximizes business opportunities for fishermen while continuing to protect the stock.

The Commonwealth is also continuing our work together towards improving fisheries science. The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries is cooperating with researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Northeastern University to bring the latest assessment technology to further inform the debate and hopefully bring some clarity to discussions about the science and the data. In the interim, it is essential



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that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration implement a new, cooperative stock assessment so that we can have credible and accurate data in order to protect the livelihoods of our fisherman and the sustainability of the groundfishery.

As you know, Governor Patrick is particularly concerned about the impact cuts in fishing allocation will have on fishermen, especially small owner-operator fishing businesses. This is why we appreciate the National Marine Fisheries Service agreeing to the Commonwealth's proposal to repurpose \$1 million in federal funds to create a Revolving Loan Fund. This fund, which we are currently implementing, will help small fishermen get access to quota and weather this difficult time for the Massachusetts fishery.

Finally, I'm thankful that you have committed to act on the Governor's pending disaster request in the near future and that you are continuing to evaluate whether additional economic assistance, including an expanded fishery disaster declaration, is warranted due to the cod assessment.

I appreciate both your and your agencies' collaboration with the Commonwealth on managing the Gulf of Maine Cod fishery. Thank you again for your dedication to this important issue. I look forward to continue working together to find the right solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Sullivan Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Richard K. Sullivan Jr.

cc: Mary Griffin, MA Commissioner of Department of Fish and Game
Paul Diodati, MA Director of Marine Fisheries
Bill White, MA Assistant Secretary for Federal Affairs