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FIRST ESSEX AND MIDDLESEX  
DISTRICT

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Dear Council Members,

While I was briefly in attendance at today's meeting, I regret that official duties here at the State House have precluded me from remaining with you for what is surely a discussion that will have nearly inestimable consequences for the survival of the commercial and recreational fisheries of New England. Given the importance of the situation we face today, however, I appreciate the opportunity to express the following thoughts.

First, we all need to remember that pursuant to the Magnuson Act on its successors, our nation manages fisheries to achieve sustainable harvests, and not for the purpose of merely increasing stock biomass to achieve the dictates of a scientific abstract. Over the past few years it would seem that extremely precautionary measures have been undertaken to guarantee that scientific goals will be met.

Yet, time has proven that there is no guarantee of success and the sacrifices made by fishing families to secure such guarantees have decimated the industry as we know it. Thus, it is time for a shift, and precaution should be used to protect fishing families and ports, not to inflict hardship upon them. Margins of error shouldn't be allowed to drive more restrictions that threaten the survival of the industry.

Second, the degree of uncertainty that is permeating the current discussions shouldn't be the basis for decisions that could well put harvesters and others out of business. Because there is uncertainty, and because there has been a trend toward extreme precaution, doesn't mean that extraordinary severe reductions in catch should be implemented. Examples such as trawl cables that weren't right on a survey vessel, and the more recent need to recalculate the Pollock quota by 600% in 2010 prove that uncertainty has consequences.

Thus, my strong belief is that the Council needs to demand more accurate and concrete information upon which to base its important decisions. And until it has that kind of information it should exhaust every option available to protect fishing families that have sacrificed so much to support conservation and rebuilding. Those options include such things as more flexible allocation procedures, and implementation of reasonable catch limits with an understanding that they will be modified if a problem arises, rather than the reverse.

Lastly, I urge you to exercise great caution as you move forward with developing Framework 48. Please put faith in those who have sacrificed to survive in the industry to be good stewards, and please seek to bring NOAA, and the Council, fishing families and others together to work as never before to protect the industry that every American deserves to rely on to access one of the greatest food sources in the world.

Thank you for your consideration, and, as always, I pledge to work with you in any way possible to build a better future for our New England fisheries.

Sincerely,  


Bruce Tarr  
State Senator