



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

February 24, 2014

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary
U.S Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

As the mayor of the top grossing commercial fishing port in America, I strongly support the recent Congressional action to provide disaster relief for fisherman and the fishing industry. Far too many New Bedford fishermen, shore-side workers, and their families have suffered acute financial hardship in recent years. About half of our one hundred groundfish vessels have left the fishery, causing hundreds of fishermen and shore-support workers to lose their jobs. The fishing industry is not only the largest employer in New Bedford, but the industry is integral to the historical and cultural fabric of our region. New Bedford is committed to commercial fishing; we are the center of the New England industry today, and we expect to remain so for years to come.

The disaster funding offers an important opportunity not only to relieve those who have suffered economic loss, but to ensure that our fishing fleet is prepared for the future. The funding can support the long-term sustainability of the industry by:

- Assisting state and industry efforts to become full participants in fisheries science and management efforts, including cooperative research programs;
- Retraining fishermen who have lost work opportunities;
- Supporting crew and family services programs;
- Capitalizing loan assistance programs;
- Funding shore-side infrastructure support.

As you know, the fishing industry is complex and ever changing. It is critical to design the disaster relief program carefully and thoughtfully. The City of New Bedford and our fishing industry stand ready to assist you in designing the best possible program to ensure that the groundfish industry endures the current turmoil and is ready to thrive again in the future.

Sincerely,


Jon Mitchell

cc: Governor Deval Patrick
Senator Elizabeth Warren
Senator Edward Markey
Congressman William Keating
Congresswoman Niki Tsongas