



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

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September 2, 2015

His Excellency Charles D. Baker
Governor of Massachusetts
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Division of Marine Fisheries Bin 3 Draft Spending Plan

Dear Governor Baker:

I write with respect to the Division of Marine Fisheries' Bin 3 draft spending plan to offer the following comments, and more particularly to urge support for the draft plan's 20,000-pound groundfish landing threshold to determine aid eligibility and to note my strong opposition to any allocation of Bin 3 funds for at-sea monitoring.

Given the limited amount of Bin 3 emergency aid, it is critical to ensure that this aid is directly distributed to those fishermen that Bin 3 is intended to serve, namely, commercial fishermen active in and dependent upon the groundfish fishery. Focusing aid in this manner will provide the best means of ensuring the long-term viability of this indispensable regional industry, and to that end I support the 20,000-pound landing threshold.

Further, I object to any distribution of Bin 3 funds for the at-sea monitoring program. Simply stated, unrestricted aid to groundfish vessels is critical at this juncture, and those fishermen eligible to receive funds are best able to determine how Bin 3 emergency aid should be used, including as an offset for monitoring costs should the need arise.

As a final matter, please note that I support any effort to enlarge the qualifying period to include Fishing Year 2012, and I am strongly in favor of distributing aid to permit holders meeting the threshold in any one year during such period. Fishing Year 2012 represents the last full fishing season prior to the groundfish disaster declaration and the significant catch restrictions that followed – restrictions that severely impacted the active in-shore groundfish fleet, in particular – so that expanding the qualifying period in this way will result in a more equitable distribution of Bin 3 funds.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of this matter, and should you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or a member of my staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Straus', written in a cursive style.

Rep. William M. Straus
10th Bristol District

cc: Secretary Matthew Beaton, Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
Commissioner George Peterson, Jr, Department of Fish & Game
Acting Director David Pierce, Division of Marine Fisheries