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COAST GUARD SUBCOMMITTEE

FINANCE

INTELLIGENCE

RANKING MEMBER, SMALL BUSINESS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1903

November 30, 2011

Dear Fishing Industry Members:

Thank you for your thoughtful and timely letter dated November 14, 2011. As Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard for the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, the views and insights of the New England groundfish community are of great concern to me.

The diversity of ports, vessels and sectors represented on this letter reflects the importance of your request. I want you to know that I clearly understand that you write neither in support of, nor in opposition to, catch shares. You have asked for a focused effort from Congress on the operational issues that must be addressed for your businesses to survive, and I am committed to working with you to achieve the stability and predictability your businesses will require for long term economic sustainability.

As you identified, strong science is the key to any successful management system. I have championed the importance of increased funding for fisheries science at every level, from NOAA surveys and stock assessments to collaborative research and industry-based surveys. I am very pleased that in a budget year where significant cuts were made across the board for NOAA programs, Congress has recognized the importance of science in supporting effective management by providing \$67 million, an increase over previous years, for stock assessments.

In July, I led a letter from the New England Senate delegation to Eric Schwaab, NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, asking him to work with Congress and the groundfish industry on a number of the issues you raised in your letter. I asked him to find ways to reduce at-sea monitoring costs; evaluate existing input controls and eliminate unnecessary restrictions on effort; reduce the reporting burden for sector members; and ensure access to additional unused quota where scientifically justified.

I also recommended the following additional improvements to the sector program: improve data management to reduce the reporting burden for sector members and speed the flow of data into the stock assessment process; improve socio-economic data and its incorporation into the management process; examine the impact and potential for permit banks to mitigate adverse effects on small vessels and communities. In a follow-up letter in September, I asked NOAA to expedite the development of electronic monitoring or other cost-effective alternatives to at-sea observers to reduce monitoring costs.

NOAA has agreed to make all of these modifications, or work with the Council to

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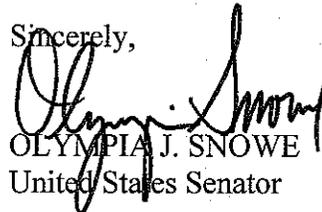
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implement them where necessary. I am following the progress of these changes closely, and will work with NOAA to ensure they are addressing these issues in a timely and comprehensive fashion.

Again, I greatly appreciate your input, and encourage you to continue your outreach efforts so that Congress receives broad input that fully reflects the diverse viewpoints held by this vibrant industry. I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the success of a diverse groundfish fleet throughout New England.

Sincerely,



OLYMPIA J. SNOWE
United States Senator