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GOVERNOR

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04333-0001

OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
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April 20, 2007

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The State of Maine formally requests that you declare the Northeast multispecies fishery a failure under section 312 (a)(1)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Act). This action would recognize the severe cumulative impacts in Maine due to the extraordinary number and severity of the restrictions that have resulted from a dozen years of trying to reduce fishing effort while maintaining a sustainable fishery.

The Northeast multispecies fishery has had certain stocks experience overfishing for each of the past twelve years, in spite of the New England Fishery Management Council's and National Marine Fisheries Service's best efforts to reduce fishing effort to allow those stocks to rebuild while also having a sustainable fishery. The necessary reductions of fishing effort have occurred through a permit and boat buyback, severe cuts in Days-At-Sea, area and rolling closures, increased mesh size and trip limits.

For the State of Maine, the cumulative impacts of the Amendments 5 (1994), 7 (1996), 9 (1998), 13 (2004), and a number of frameworks have resulted in the elimination of half of the active groundfish fleet since 1994, leaving only 110 active groundfish fishermen. The shoreside infrastructure associated with the groundfish fleet has declined similarly. Concurrently, Maine has only two active groundfish boats in the eastern half of the state. Those vessel owners left in Maine fleet have invested millions of dollars in purchasing fishing permits and leasing days-at-sea to accumulate enough days to survive economically. Others have reduced their maintenance and safety schedules to the point where some vessels are not being maintained, critical safety gear is not kept current, and we are at risk of losing lives every day.

Maine, the other New England states, the New England Fishery Management Council, and National Marine Fisheries Service have all committed to rebuilding the groundfish fishery aggressively to get out of the cycle of seemingly endless management changes and a lack of success in reaching biological targets. The current work on Amendment 16 is a sure sign of this commitment but we are concerned that Maine's future in the groundfish industry will be threatened without your help through a declaration under the Act.



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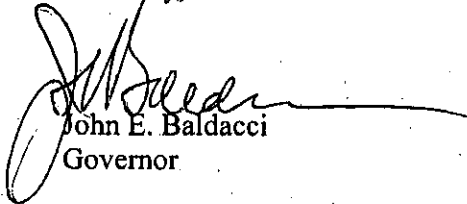
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I am requesting your assistance to help the people of the state of Maine secure their continued participation at the decreased fishing rates that are necessary to get this fishery back to sustainable levels. The multispecies stocks are rebuilding, but it will be a serious injustice to the nation if only a few fishermen primarily from outside of Maine will be allowed to harvest those fish.

The Maine Department of Marine Resources is ready to assist your Department's evaluation of this request. Commissioner George Lapointe can be reached at (207) 624-6553 or by email at george.lapointe@maine.gov.

Thank you for your consideration of this request that is critical to Maine's fishing industry, now and in the future.

Sincerely,



John E. Baldacci
Governor

cc: Senator Olympia Snowe
Senator Susan Collins
Congressman Tom Allen
Congressman Michael Michaud.