

The Honorable Gary Locke
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

December 2009

Dear Secretary Locke:

The implementation of the reauthorized Magnuson Stevens Act has highlighted the urgent need to improve the fisheries management process throughout the nation. I write to ask for your help in implementing a visionary pilot in New England that is a necessary first step in making these critical improvements.

For decades, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has worked closely with the New England Fishery Management Council to meet all relevant federal mandates. The Northeast Regional Office and the Northeast Science Center each play a crucial role in supporting the Council's work and in protecting our fisheries and fishing communities. However, the changes outlined in the reauthorized Magnuson Stevens Act have placed additional demands on each of these three entities, and it has become clear that our region's bureaucracy is unable to efficiently meet its expanded obligations.

I value the work done by these institutions and recognize the tremendous challenges each faces. It is critical that their individual and collective performance be maximized if our region is to succeed. Therefore, we must carefully evaluate and seek to improve the manner in which these groups operate and interact.

One important area to be addressed is the communication and coordination among these institutions. The leaders of each entity have repeatedly acknowledged significant challenges with inter-organizational communication, but these challenges appear to be increasing rather than improving. We owe it to both the resource and the various stakeholders of the fisheries to immediately address these issues and take corrective action where appropriate.

Additionally, our bureaucracy is often driven by process and protocol rather than by mission and outcome. Over the last two decades, great strides have been made in our understanding of the design and realignment of public agency infrastructure to foster innovative, adaptive and effective management. In light of these advances, it is time to evaluate our current system, identify inefficiencies, and implement appropriate solutions.

To accomplish this, I request your support in coordinating an independent and comprehensive systems analysis and efficiency review of the three institutions, both individually and collectively. This process should be performed by an established management consultant and would ideally include:

- Extensive interviews with leadership and staff of each organization as well as a wide range of fishery stakeholders to understand their respective views on the performance of the current system and their suggestions for reforms.

- An objective and thorough evaluation of the internal structure and management practices of each entity.
- A rigorous assessment of the coordination and communication among the three entities and specific suggestions for necessary improvements.
- A detailed and public summary of the findings of this initiative as well as the resulting recommendations.

This assessment should provide a blueprint for reform within and among the three organizations in order to facilitate a more effective, performance-based approach to fishery management in New England. I believe that a successful effort could form a model that can be replicated in the other seven councils, and lead to improvements in the process of fishery management around the country.

I note that Congress recently approved the Fiscal Year 2010 budget including a line item of \$191 million dollars for Fisheries Management. Perhaps you could find a way to fund this request through the use of these funds.

I share a strong desire to improve an antiquated and ineffective bureaucracy in New England, and trust that there is enormous potential for improvement in the management of our federal fisheries. We desperately need your help in making these reforms.

Thank you for your consideration of this request; the sustainability and success of our fisheries depend on it.

Sincerely,



John Pappalardo
Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council

Cc:
Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Margaret Spring
Patricia Kurkul
Dr. Nancy Thompson
Paul Howard