

September 20, 2011

His Excellency Deval Patrick
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick:

We, the undersigned – representing a wide range of watershed associations, environmental groups and concerned citizens of the Commonwealth – are deeply concerned about the status of river herring in New England. Historically, nearly every river in Massachusetts and along the Atlantic coast supported immense annual migrations of these fish. But today, river herring have plummeted to record low levels with population declines estimated at 99 percent or more.

Communities throughout Massachusetts have worked tirelessly to clean rivers, remove dams and restore habitat to promote the recovery of river herring runs. However, we are concerned these efforts are being compromised because these fish are not provided effective protections from at-sea bycatch in federal waters. Recent evidence show that over three million river herring are caught unintentionally each year by vessels fishing for Atlantic herring. In fact, data shows that hundreds of thousands of river herring can be caught in one tow of a herring midwater trawler's net – more fish than are recorded in many of the state's largest river herring runs.

This is a pressing and long unaddressed concern, but a plan to minimize the number of river herring caught at sea is undergoing the final stages of review in the coming months. In light of this, we respectfully request that you direct the New England Fishery Management Council members representing the Commonwealth's Division of Marine Fisheries to support the following measures in Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan to better monitor and reduce river herring bycatch:

- 100% at-sea catch monitoring on all industrial midwater trawl fishing trips.
- A prohibition on herring fishing in areas and times identified for river herring protection.
- A requirement to bring all catch aboard fishing vessels to ensure accurate sampling by an independent observer.

We hope you will agree that these provisions, which have been carefully developed and analyzed by the Council, will improve catch monitoring and reduce the Atlantic herring fishery's interactions with river herring.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Julia Blatt
Executive Director
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Ian Cooke
Executive Director
Neponset River Watershed Association

Arthur Benner
President
Alewives Anonymous

Maggie Geist
Executive Director
Association to Preserve Cape Cod

Peter Coffin
Coordinator
Blackstone River Coalition

Renata von Tscharnner
President
Charles River Conservancy

Robert Zimmerman, Jr.
Executive Director
Charles River Watershed Association

Mark Rasmussen
President
Coalition for Buzzards Bay

Peter Shelley
Vice President
Conservation Law Foundation

Michael Cole
Director
Deerfield River Watershed Association

Ken Pruitt
Managing Director
Environmental League of Massachusetts

Ellen Mass
President
Friends of Alewife Reservation

Judy Lehrer Jacobs
Executive Director
Friends of the Blue Hills

Don Palladino
President
Friends of Herring River

Jon Nash
Island Creek Smelt and Herring Run Restoration
Project
Duxbury, Mass.

Pine duBois
Executive Director
Jones River Watershed Association

Kevin Galvin
Executive Director
Marston Mills River Watershed Association

Linda Orel
Executive Director
Massachusetts Association of Conservation
Commissions

Ed Himlan
Executive Director
Massachusetts Watershed Coalition

EK Khalsa
Executive Director
Mystic River Watershed Association

Carol Carson
President
New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance

Samantha Woods
Executive Director
North and South Rivers Watershed Association

Rob Moir
Executive Director
Ocean River Institute

Alison Field-Juma
Director
Organization for the Assabet River

Marlene Schroeder
President
Parker River Clean Water Association

John Duane – on behalf of:
Town of Wellfleet Natural Resources Advisory
Board

David Glater
President
Trout Unlimited, Inc. – Greater Boston Chapter

Jeff Hughes
Herring Warden
Wellfleet, Mass.

Hillary Greenberg
Health and Conservation Agent – Town of
Wellfleet
Wellfleet Conservation Commission

William Rose
President
Westfield River Watershed Association

Matthew C. Patrick
Executive Director
Westport River Watershed Alliance

George M Loring III
Weymouth Herring Run Warden
Mass Representative to the ASMFC

CC: Secretary Rick Sullivan
NEFMC Executive Director Paul J. Howard
DMF Director Paul Diodati
DMF Deputy Director David E. Pierce
State Senate President Therese Murray
Speaker Robert DeLeo