



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

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June 15, 2015

E.F. "Terry" Stockwell, III, Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Re: Georges Bank Habitat Amendment 2 Alternatives

Dear Chairman Stockwell:

I am writing in my capacity as a Massachusetts State Representative. I have the honor of representing a district which includes both the Fairhaven and New Bedford waterfronts in the Port of New Bedford. The significant presence of the commercial scallop fleet in our port means that my constituents are both dependent upon and supportive of thoughtful management plans which protect the ocean resources.

For many years I have worked with others locally in submitting comments and testimony before the Council on management issues affecting the New England waters under your jurisdiction. I hope that you and your fellow Council members will consider these comments as you consider final Council action affecting the current submissions on habitat management issues for Georges Bank.

I wish to add my voice urging Council adoption of the committee "Preferred Alternative" which is before you on June 16, 2015.

I am aware that your difficult task is to adopt plans and amendments which are derived from good science and within the legal requirements of the Act. This balance is not always clear. In this case, I believe the Preferred Alternative before you is protective of Georges Bank habitat by restricting access to the most vulnerable areas and provides procedure for addressing impacts to habitat for certain species. Conceptually, I am especially glad to see that the Preferred Alternative takes into consideration Georges Bank as a whole as opposed to the method of the existing habitat focus which was limited to closed groundfish areas.

A critical and legitimate balancing of the economic and environmental impacts, in my view, is also present in the fact that the Preferred Alternative allows a scallop access area in one portion

of the Northern Edge habitat area while maintaining a restriction on groundfishing. This is a realistic approach which I believe is justified by the science. This aspect includes mitigation measures to further serve the goals of the Act.

As a complete package, the Preferred Alternative enhances habitat protection by added new closure areas and includes strong mitigation measures for impacts which could occur.

I hope that the full Council will therefore adopt this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'William M. Straus', written in a cursive style.

William M. Straus
Massachusetts State Representative
10th Bristol District