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August 23, 2018

Dr. Thomas Nies
Executive Director
NEFMC
50 Water St
Newburyport, Ma.01950

Dear Doctor Nies,

I am writing in support of Captain Domenic Santoro's request for a mussel fishery exemption in the GRC HMA.

I am asking the committee and council to consider the following:

1. The attached letter from Captain Mark Rynasiewicz describing the gear used and the nature of the mussel fishery on the Nantucket shoals. Mark fished this area in the 1980s and 1990s. The multiple areas he fished are indicative of the dynamic nature of the shoals and the shifting silting bottom in the area.
2. My partner, Captain Tom Ryshavy, ran the Melissa and Vanessa and fished mussels for several years on the Nantucket Shoals. In early December 1992 several weeks after the "Perfect Storm" an unnamed northeaster blew for about 5 days. There were steady gale winds with hurricane force gusts. When Tom finally got out he called me at 6am and said "there are boulders the size of Volkswagens where I fished last week. Can you imagine the depth and quantity of the sediment that covered these boulders?"
3. A better understanding of storm driven sedimentation and patterns of epifaunal growth and recruitment is needed before conclusions can be drawn about the presence of long lived epifauna being indicative of "stable bottom".
4. In January 2017 Doug Potts of the NMFS advised Domenic Santoro that he could fish in the entire dredge exemption area. In January 2018 at the council meeting there is recorded testimony from Domenic stating that he wanted to make sure he could fish mussels in the HMA. After the January 2018 meeting Mr. Pentony told Domenic he was aware of his situation and

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was looking into his options. No one had the common courtesy to advise Domenic that there was a pending action in the federal register to prohibit mussel fishing in the HMA. That prohibition became effective in April 2018

5. Excluding mussel fishing in the HMA effectively reduced the existing mussel fishing exemption area by over 50%.
6. I would like the council and committee members to consider the following question..." if mussels were a regulated species and commercial quantities were found in the HMA would they be considered a fishery or habitat?"

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Silkes, Pres".

Bill Silkes, President

CC: Michelle Bachman
Domenic Santoro