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April 4, 2018

John F. Quinn, Ph. D., Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water St. Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Chairman Quinn:

We are writing to set the record straight on some recent mischaracterizations regarding sector enrollment for Fishing Year 2018.

As folks that are intimately involved in the groundfish fishery know, viability is a critical and constant concern. This concern exists both for the industry members involved in the groundfish fishery and enrolled in sectors and the sector entities themselves. NEFS 7, like many other sectors has struggled over the last few years to maintain operational viability because landings have been severely constrained by low quotas. Since NEFS 7 & NEFS 8 have shared a Sector Manager for many years the two sectors have worked collaboratively to try and find solutions to NEFS 7 sector viability issues. However, with continued low quota, one vessel groundfishing and six vessels monkfish fishing it became obvious during FY 2017 that NEFS 7 could not continue to function as a standalone sector. With that knowledge in mind NEFS 7's Board of Directors and NEFS 8's Board of Directors took appropriate steps to merge NEFS 7 membership into NEFS 8 for FY 2018. The decision to merge occurred and was communicated to NMFS months ago.

We didn't realize we needed to justify to the fishing world why these internal decisions were made, or how we handle our internal business affairs. However, we feel compelled to do so in light of recent politics, attacks and mischaracterizations of facts. Let us be clear, the decisions made to merge NEFS 7 membership into NEFS 8 has nothing to do with the NEFS 9 situation or the Carlos Rafael situation.

While it is an internal business decision of any sector, it may be useful for Council Members to keep in mind that as quota's continue to constrain the fishery it is likely more sectors will need to consider merging together to offset operational costs, look towards fee structures that includes non-groundfish landings and/or seek financial funding from non-fishing based sources. The viability of groundfish fishermen and sectors should be something the Council is constantly taking into consideration.

Sincerely,



Linda McCann, Sector Manager

CC: Jackie Odell, Northeast Seafood Coalition

Northeast Fishery Sector VIII
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