

Focusing On The Strength Of Massachusetts' Maritime Commerce

The Patrick Administration Highlights Economic Development In Coastal Industries

GLOUCESTER - Wednesday, September 10, 2008 - Today, a maritime commerce roundtable discussion with industry leaders launched the first in a series of economic development forums focused on the impact of coastal water dependent industries in Massachusetts. The meeting held at the Gloucester Seafood Display Auction was attended by over 20 businesses, community leaders and Undersecretary Gregory Bialecki, the Patrick Administration's chief advisor on business development.

Maritime commerce includes businesses linked to industries dependent on coastal and offshore waters use. Industries like commercial fishing including harvesting, processing and distribution; coastal tourism and recreation; shipbuilding; transportation, and waterway transportation are typical activities that comprise this industry sector. Typical revenues include \$268 million in scallops, fish and other seafood in the New Bedford area, and \$237 million annual sales derived from transportation and tourism related activities. The Patrick Administration is bringing together these groups of businesses to look at their collective needs and unique characteristics.

"Our goal is to engage companies, whose businesses rely on the use of coastal and off shore waters, in substantive conversations to fully understand the economic development challenges and opportunities of these industries," said Gregory Bialecki. "Based on what we hear, we will look for ways to leverage resources and partnerships to ensure that this industry sector is strong and is positioned for growth here in Massachusetts."

Several companies and local officials attended the roundtable discussion. In addition to hosting the meeting, Gloucester Seafood Display Auction also talked about the significance of bringing together industry and local leaders to provide information about these industries. "We offer a forum in which commercial fishermen and buyers can conduct commerce that not only feeds thousands of people, but creates and supports hundreds of jobs," said Larry Ciulla of Gloucester Seafood Display Auction. "By working with our local and state leaders, we can preserve maritime commerce and collectively work to grow it in ways that will strengthen local economies."

The focus on maritime commerce is a continuation of the Patrick Administration's ongoing efforts to spotlight a key industry each month. This month's forum follows previous focus on the information technology/communications, manufacturing, defense technology/homeland security, and creative economy industry sectors. The administration has been using these forums to forge stronger relationships with each industry sector and to showcase the strength of the Massachusetts economy. Additional maritime commerce roundtable discussions are being planned for other coastal communities like New Bedford, Boston, Salem and southeast Cape Cod.

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The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development is one of eight Secretariats that make up the Governors Cabinet. Under the leadership of Secretary Dan O'Connell, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development oversees the following undersecretariats: the Departments of Business Development, Housing and Community Development, and Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation.