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Baker-Polito Administration, Federal Congressional Delegation Seek
Financial Relief for State Fishing Industry
Letter to Federal Agencies Requests Financial Assistance for At-Sea-Monitoring
Program

BOSTON – Joined by the entire Massachusetts congressional delegation, the Baker-
Polito Administration today sent a letter to the Secretary of Commerce and other
federal partners urging their support in covering the costs of At-Sea-Monitoring
(ASM) for the entire Northeast fishery. Additionally, the correspondence requests
that the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) expedite
electronic monitoring and other cost-saving alternatives to At-Sea-Monitoring.

“We write with serious concerns over recent actions taken by the National
Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association Fisheries Service,” said the letter to the
United States Secretary of Commerce and members of the House and Senate
Appropriations Committees. “While we too respect the importance of proper
fisheries management, we question the fiscal and programmatic decisions that the
agency has made of late with regards to the Northeast Fishery.”

The letter, which comes on the heels of a request by the New England Fisheries
Management Council to suspend ASM and further evaluate the program’s
effectiveness, seeks to relieve the Commonwealth’s vibrant and economically
significant fishing industry from financial and regulatory measures imposed by NOAA
and other federal agencies.

The delegation expresses their strong opposition to the use of Bin 3 federal disaster,
appropriated to Massachusetts’ commercial fishermen after the 2012 federally-
declared fishery failure in the Northeast Groundfish fishery, to subsidize the At-Sea-
Monitoring Program. The communication to federal partners goes on to note that
the intent of the funding was to be used for the future viability of the
Commonwealth’s fishing industry.

“Using this money to make up for NOAA’s reinterpretation of how to prioritize
funding is far afield from the intent for which this money was appropriated, and
would only help NOAA’s inability to fund their own budget gap, which hardly relates
to the viability of the fishermen of Massachusetts,” writes the delegation. “It would
create a short lived future for many of these fishermen who will be forced into
inactivity or worse.”
The request from the Baker-Polito Administration and the state’s congressional delegation both encourages NOAA Fisheries to prove the cost-effectiveness of the burdensome At-Sea-Monitoring Program and support federal funds to pay for the monitoring. In a further attempt to assist the Commonwealth’s fishing industry, the letter also encourages federal fishing partners to use Massachusetts’ commercial fishing industry as a resource to effectively gather the best available data and develop monitoring practices going forward.

Click here to read the letter signed by Governor Baker and the congressional delegation.

Click here for text of the letter (.docx).

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