

EDWARD J. MARKEY  
MASSACHUSETTS

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SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
FOREIGN RELATIONS

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## United States Senate

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September 23, 2013

Mr. Frank Skaggs  
Director  
Office of Disaster Assistance  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
Field Operations Center – East  
101 Marietta Street, N.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Dear Mr. Skaggs:

We are writing in strong support of the certification made by the Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts that the small businesses in Barnstable, Bristol, Essex, Plymouth, Norfolk and Suffolk counties have suffered substantial economic injury as a result of a fishery resource disaster. We also strongly support Governor Patrick's request for assistance by the Small Business Administration (SBA) through the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program.

In recent years, our fishermen and fishing communities have been struggling to survive amid reductions in some Annual Catch Limits (ACL) that have limited fishing opportunities. As a result, many fishermen are drawing on personal income or extended credit, shifting more fishing costs to crew, shrinking crew size, or postponing vessel maintenance.

Last year, the Department of Commerce declared a fishery failure for the Northeast multispecies fishery, including Massachusetts, for the 2013 season. Our fishermen and fishing related businesses need SBA assistance as they work to adjust to a perfect storm of events that threatens the future one of our nation's oldest and most storied industries and the coastal communities that depend on it. The assistance would be used to help ease the economic effects of federal regulations imposed to stop what the Department of Commerce and fishermen anticipate will be dramatic declines in groundfish stocks in the Massachusetts multispecies fishery, while also allowing critical investments to make the industry more sustainable in the long term.

The problems facing our fishermen and fishing related businesses have been exacerbated by a significant reduction in the 2012 ACL for Gulf of Maine cod, an important stock for the Northeast industry. This reduction was precipitated by 2011 and 2012 National Marine Fisheries Service ("NMFS") stock assessments that determined that the stock may not be as healthy as previously thought. The 2013 ACL was reduced by 72 percent compared to the 2012 level. Other critical stocks of cod, yellowtail, haddock, and plaice have seen similar reductions. It is likely that these reduced ACLs will be in place for several years, further compounding the impact of these cuts to the industry.

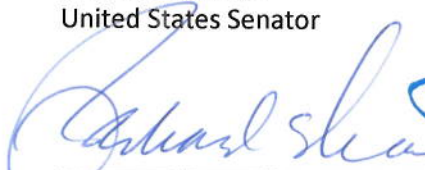
Therefore, we respectfully request that you work with us to ensure adequate economic relief is available to help Massachusetts fishermen and fishing communities endure what is becoming one of the most challenging situations in the history of the Northeast groundfish fishery.


We remain committed to preserving and promoting our fishing industry. We look forward to continuing to work with you to quickly and effectively obtain assistance for this critical industry in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,


  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

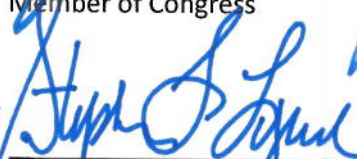
  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress

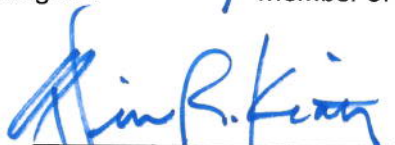
  
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