

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2016

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

As Members of Congress from states with rich fishing heritage and storied maritime industries, we write today to voice our concerns about the current fishery management structure for the black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup fish stocks. As fluctuations in ocean temperatures shift fish populations northward, New England fishermen are unfairly shortchanged when bountiful stocks managed by a Fishery Management Council outside of their region allocates local states low catch quotas.

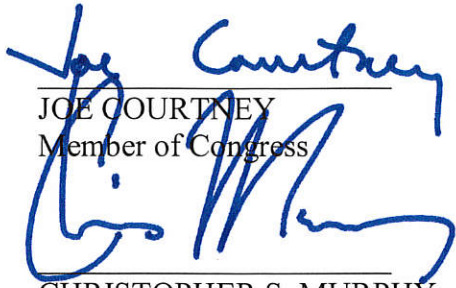
It has long been acknowledged that changes in our oceans' ecosystems would require greater coordination among Regional Fishery Management Councils established through the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). In fact, in a 2007 report to Congress on council management coordination required by the 2006 MSA reauthorization, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) stated that "issues arise when overlapping species are managed exclusively by one Council." However, there are several overlapping species that we believe would be most prudently managed jointly by the MAFMC and the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) rather than exclusively through the MAFMC.

Since the aforementioned 2007 report, New England fishermen have consistently voiced their concerns regarding black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup quotas set by the MAFMC. New England states are noticing these fish stocks moving northward into traditional New England fishing grounds, yet state-by-state commercial allocations remain so low that our fishermen continue to throw catch overboard as fishermen coming from as far away as North Carolina can legally take sometimes more than ten times that of New England vessels in the same waters. Using summer flounder as an example, the MAFMC June 2015 summer flounder assessment state-by-state allocations provided New England states a combined quota of less than 25 percent share, while North Carolina had a share of over 27 percent. Furthermore, that same assessment noted that 24 percent of all commercial summer flounder caught in 2014 were in Statistical Area 537—a zone just to the east of Long Island Sound and south of Cape Cod.

Looking at the current trend of northward movement of fish stocks, we urge the Department of Commerce to direct the MAFMC to work in coordination with the NEFMC on a joint management plan for the black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup fisheries. Until NEFMC member states' interests are officially considered when negotiating fishery management plans through joint management, our fishing communities will continue to suffer from the existing out-of-date allocation formula. We sincerely request that you take these considerations into account

look forward to greater coordination among the coastal Atlantic states. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



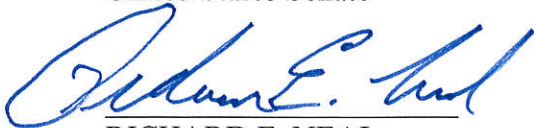
ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



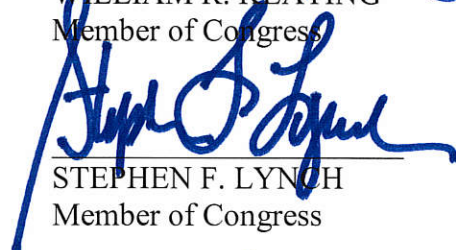
RICHARD E. NEAL
Member of Congress



WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress



MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress



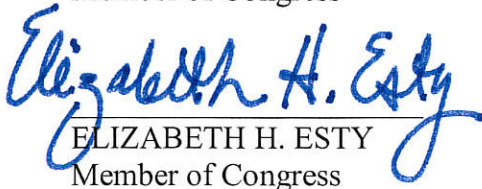
STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress



NIKI TSONGAS
Member of Congress



JAMES A. HIMES
Member of Congress



ELIZABETH H. ESTY
Member of Congress



KATHERINE M. CLARK
Member of Congress



JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, III
Member of Congress



SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress