

SENATOR OLYMPIA J. SNOWE

Chair, Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, Fisheries and Coast Guard



OUTSPOKEN LEADER FOR MAINE'S FISHERMEN

"I fully support the goals and mission of [the State's Groundfish] Task Force, and I am committed to working with you and the State of Maine in the pursuit of innovative and effective ways to help the groundfish industry remain intact in the short term and prosper in the long term."

– from a Snowe letter to Governor Baldacci, September 3, 2003.

"I urge you to allow the New England Fishery Management Council, fishermen, and other affected parties to find the right combination of management options that will allow for minimal harm to fishermen and their communities" and "I request that an independent economist (not previously associated with the Amendment 13 analyses) conduct parallel economic analyses . . . to establish a sound economic framework upon which to proactively identify and mitigate any impacts."

– from a Snowe letter to Dr. Hogarth, September 17, 2003.

". . . it's essential to devote as much effort to economic analyses as has been devoted to ecological analyses . . . we must do everything we can to identify and quantify these impacts with as much precision as possible, so that we can find the best ways to avoid or mitigate the impacts."

– from Snowe's opening statement at the Portland Fish Exchange, September 19, 2003.

"...we must clarify that rebuilding does not have to be done in ways that results in such drastic upheaval of fishery-dependent communities. We need a flexible, common sense, reasonable approach that preserves the fishermen as well as the fish."

– from Snowe's opening statement for the Amendment 13 hearing, October 22, 2003.

"Clearly, Amendment 13 as proposed must not stand. That we are even at this point is the product of a disturbing pattern of overly strict and inflexible interpretations of current fisheries law by NMFS."

– from Snowe's op-ed in the Portland Press Herald, December 18, 2003.

"I am pleased that NMFS has responded to my concerns and those voiced by fishermen and is calling for the earliest possible meeting of the Council . . . we need to use all the time we have to ensure any remaining questions are answered before our court-ordered timetable runs out."

– from Snowe's press release following NMFS' announcement of the Council Groundfish Committee that she requested; this meeting occurred January 14-15, 2004.

"I have always valued your willingness to participate in the fishery management process" and "I appreciate your interest in the conservation and management of Northeast groundfish stocks."

– Dr. Bill Hogarth, in a letter to Snowe, January 27, 2004.

"I can assure you [steaming time] will be on the Council's agenda as soon as we receive the technical analyses and a report from the advisors" and "I believe all parties benefitted from the special meeting of the Council's Groundfish Committee in mid-January, convened at your request, to address these very serious concerns and further advise the Council."

– Council Chairman David Borden, in a letter to Snowe, February 5, 2004.

"What we need is a federal fisheries policy that can be interpreted and applied in ways that recognize and respond to the unique conditions facing each individual fishery . . . The Magnuson-Stevens Act must express enough flexibility to accommodate these variations, so that managers can craft unique, innovative solutions based on the conditions and needs of the fish stocks and fishing communities in question."

– from Snowe's statement accompanying introduction of S. 2066, the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 2004, February 11, 2004.

FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2004

S. 2066, a bill to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Help Sustain Maine's Groundfishery

- Requires the New England Fishery Management Council to take into account the differences in "steaming times" as a part of the Fishery Management Plan process.

Currently, Maine's large boats lose precious days-at-sea while in transit, and they need a system that would allow them to not be penalized in this way for going to distant offshore areas. A proper accounting of steaming time would allow them to continue to fish out of Portland, ME, which is critical for maintaining the overall Portland fishing infrastructure, including the Fish Exchange.

- Repeals the arbitrary 10-year rebuilding timeline requirement while allowing fishing rates that produce the "maximum sustainable yield."

To meet the current "10 year rule" for rebuilding, scientists set speculative biomass targets that are used to justify drastic – yet often biologically unnecessary – reductions in fishing. Snowe's bill would repeal it and set fishing rates at levels that would allow for maximum sustainable yield ("F-msy"). F-msy does not allow overfishing. It is an adaptive rate that simply allows surplus stocks to be harvested, enabling stocks to grow to a state of ecosystem balance. This language represents a common-sense middle ground that literally would help preserve fish and fishermen.

- Sharpens the focus of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) protections to those parts of EFH that are "Habitat Areas of Particular Concern."

The Act currently requires managers to protect those areas of the ocean that are essential for fish survival. Congress meant for this term to apply to areas that were especially important or highly vulnerable, but since any and all water in the ocean is "essential," the term has lost meaning. By requiring managers to focus on a subset of EFH, called "Habitat Areas of Particular Concern," Snowe's bill restores the original intent of Congress, makes management more efficient and effective, and does not lead to unnecessary habitat protection regulations.

- Creates a national cooperative research and management program, consisting of activities between fishermen, scientists, States, and NMFS.

In recent years, fishermen have teamed up with scientists to use fishing vessels as platforms for conducting research, allowing scientists to assess the sizes of previously unstudied stocks. In many cases, like monkfish, this has led to new fishing opportunities. Snowe's bill would formalize this program, while making sure that program participants are not penalized for loss of catch history or unused days-at-sea. Her bill also authorizes cooperative research funding, from \$25,000,000 in FY04 to \$45,000,000 in FY08, of which \$3,000,000 can be used for side-by-side trawls in the New England groundfishery.

- Enhances the abilities of managers and fishermen to better achieve the Act's objectives and actually achieve sustainability in our fisheries.

Snowe's bill also contains authorizations for capacity reduction and fishing quota systems as well as improvements to social and ecological impact assessments, data and information management, public meeting notices, and scientific peer reviews. Individually and collectively, items in this bill present a way forward in improving federal fisheries management.