

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We write today in support of the recent request made by New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for a commercial fishery disaster declaration in the Atlantic herring fishery for the State of New Hampshire.

We are deeply concerned about the significant decrease in the Atlantic herring stock and resulting quota reductions. In addition to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Atlantic herring permitted vessels in our state who are directly and severely impacted, Atlantic herring is a primary local source of bait for New Hampshire's important lobster and tuna fishing industries. Without disaster assistance, a wide swath of New Hampshire's fishing, seafood and restaurant industries will all see harmful financial impacts for years to come.

Given the decline in recruitment levels seen in the most recent stock assessment (2018) and the continuing decline in preliminary data from stock assessment currently underway, difficult decisions have had to be made to drastically lower the quota for the Atlantic herring fishery to just 15,574 metric tons, 86 percent lower than the quota at the start of 2018. The severe economic hardship caused by these cuts can already be seen, with the Atlantic herring fleet in New Hampshire already experiencing a 98 percent decrease in herring landings and a 97 percent decrease in ex-vessel value in 2019 compared to 2014-2018. These declines are unsustainable. Action must be taken to assist New Hampshire's harvesters during this failure.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter. New Hampshire's fishing industry has a long, storied history and has been a vital part of our Seacoast community for generations. We must do whatever is possible in this time of need. Please do not hesitate to contact Peter Clark in Senator Shaheen's Office (peter_clark@shaheen.senate.gov), Kerry Holmes in Senator Hassan's Office (kerry_holmes@hassan.senate.gov), Patrick Carroll in Congressman Pappas' Office (patrick.carroll@mail.house.gov) or Amy Slattery in Congresswoman Kuster's Office (amy.slattery@mail.house.gov) with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Jeanne Shaheen and Maggie Hassan in blue ink.

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Maggie Hassan
United States Senator

Handwritten signatures of Ann McLane Kuster and Chris Pappas in blue ink.

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Cc: Chris Oliver, NOAA Assistant Administrator
Michael Pentony, GARFO Regional Administrator
Chris Sununu, NH Governor
Scott Mason, Executive Director, NH Fish and Game
Cheri Patterson, Chief of Marine Fisheries, NH Fish and Game