



MAINE
Lobstermen's Association, Inc.
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Glen Libby, Chairman
Midcoast Fishermen's Association
450 Glenmere Road
Port Clyde, ME 04855

June 23, 2008

Dear Glen:

The Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) would like to express our strong support for the Midcoast Fishermen's Association's (MFA) effort to exclude midwater trawlers from the groundfish closed areas. The MLA is an industry based fishing organization representing the interests of 1200 lobstermen and industry stakeholders along the Maine coast.

The MLA has been concerned about the midwater trawl fleet fishing in the groundfish closed areas because this gear is known to catch groundfish as a bycatch. At a time when the New England groundfish fleet continues to struggle to rebuild its stocks, it is unconscionable to allow any fishing gear with potential to kill groundfish into these closed areas. The groundfish industry cannot afford to have any of the benefits of the management plan undermined as they continue to face even more stringent management measures.

The MLA supported a ban on single and paired midwater trawl vessels in Herring Management Area 1A because of our concern that this gear breaks up schools of herring and leads to localized depletion of the resource. Based on anecdotal reports from Area 1A during the 2007 fishing season, banning midwater trawlers from Area 1A has had a positive impact on the resource.

The lobster industry had concerns that banning midwater trawl gear could negatively impact bait supply. However, we found that the purse seine fleet was very capable of providing a steady supply of bait over the course of the fishing season. In fact, when the midwater trawl ban was lifted, the remainder of the herring quota was immediately caught flooding the market with bait. This experience has given us confidence that purse seine gear is not only better for the herring resource and ecosystem, but it also avoids the potential bait shortages during the peak fall lobster fishing season.

Midwater trawl gear has tremendous fishing power and should be carefully monitored and regulated to ensure that it does not negatively impact the ecosystem. We strongly

support your effort to keep midwater trawl vessels out of the groundfish closed areas to aid in the recovery of groundfish stocks and ensure that fishing management regulations are applied equitably across all fisheries.

We wish you luck with this important effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrice McCarron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrice McCarron
Executive Director