

May 16, 2013

**An Open Letter to Federal Fishery Permit Holders in the Northeast
Regarding Observers and At-Sea Monitors**

We recognize the difficulties faced by many who fish in the Northeast of the United States, especially those of you who fish for groundfish in New England. These are very challenging times and we understand that views about the status of the resources and about the roles and responsibilities of the fishing industry, managers and scientists often differ. It is essential that we discuss and endeavor to resolve these differences in a respectful and constructive manner and we are committed to working with all of you with this in mind.

Accurate and timely information on catch and bycatch quantity and composition is essential to successful science and management. We collect this type of information in many ways, through vessel operator and dealer reports and through reports submitted by observers and at-sea monitors. We would like to thank each of you for making sure that the reports you submit are correct and on time. You should also understand that taking observers is a requirement or condition to go fishing and it is essential that you treat them with respect and help them to do their work. We would also like to ask that you direct your concerns and frustrations to us rather than the individual observers and at-sea monitors. They work hard to accomplish difficult jobs and they bear no responsibility for the predicament in which we find ourselves. Through the following link you can find information about the data observers collect and the way this data is used to support fishery science and management: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/fsb/faq.html#2>. If you have any specific questions, concerns, or suggestions you can also contact Amy Van Atten is the Chief of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Fishery Sampling Branch (amy.van.atten@noaa.gov)

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your forbearance as we work together to solve the serious fishery management challenges of our region.

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