

September 20, 2011

His Excellency Deval Patrick  
Massachusetts State House  
Office of the Governor  
Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick:

We, the undersigned – representing a wide range of watershed associations, environmental groups and concerned citizens of the Commonwealth – are deeply concerned about the status of river herring in New England. Historically, nearly every river in Massachusetts and along the Atlantic coast supported immense annual migrations of these fish. But today, river herring have plummeted to record low levels with population declines estimated at 99 percent or more.

Communities throughout Massachusetts have worked tirelessly to clean rivers, remove dams and restore habitat to promote the recovery of river herring runs. However, we are concerned these efforts are being compromised because these fish are not provided effective protections from at-sea bycatch in federal waters. Recent evidence show that over three million river herring are caught unintentionally each year by vessels fishing for Atlantic herring. In fact, data shows that hundreds of thousands of river herring can be caught in one tow of a herring midwater trawler's net – more fish than are recorded in many of the state's largest river herring runs.

This is a pressing and long unaddressed concern, but a plan to minimize the number of river herring caught at sea is undergoing the final stages of review in the coming months. In light of this, we respectfully request that you direct the New England Fishery Management Council members representing the Commonwealth's Division of Marine Fisheries to support the following measures in Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan to better monitor and reduce river herring bycatch:

- 100% at-sea catch monitoring on all industrial midwater trawl fishing trips.
- A prohibition on herring fishing in areas and times identified for river herring protection.
- A requirement to bring all catch aboard fishing vessels to ensure accurate sampling by an independent observer.

We hope you will agree that these provisions, which have been carefully developed and analyzed by the Council, will improve catch monitoring and reduce the Atlantic herring fishery's interactions with river herring.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Julia Blatt  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Ian Cooke  
Executive Director  
Neponset River Watershed Association

Arthur Benner  
President  
Alewives Anonymous

Maggie Geist  
Executive Director  
Association to Preserve Cape Cod

Peter Coffin  
Coordinator  
Blackstone River Coalition

Renata von Tscharnner  
President  
Charles River Conservancy

Robert Zimmerman, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Charles River Watershed Association

Mark Rasmussen  
President  
Coalition for Buzzards Bay

Peter Shelley  
Vice President  
Conservation Law Foundation

Michael Cole  
Director  
Deerfield River Watershed Association

Ken Pruitt  
Managing Director  
Environmental League of Massachusetts

Ellen Mass  
President  
Friends of Alewife Reservation

Judy Lehrer Jacobs  
Executive Director  
Friends of the Blue Hills

Don Palladino  
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Pine duBois  
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Jones River Watershed Association

Kevin Galvin  
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Linda Orel  
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Ed Himlan  
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New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance

Samantha Woods  
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North and South Rivers Watershed Association

Rob Moir  
Executive Director  
Ocean River Institute

Alison Field-Juma  
Director  
Organization for the Assabet River

Marlene Schroeder  
President  
Parker River Clean Water Association

John Duane – on behalf of:  
Town of Wellfleet Natural Resources Advisory  
Board

David Glater  
President  
Trout Unlimited, Inc. – Greater Boston Chapter

Jeff Hughes  
Herring Warden  
Wellfleet, Mass.

William Rose  
President  
Westfield River Watershed Association

Hillary Greenberg  
Health and Conservation Agent – Town of  
Wellfleet  
Wellfleet Conservation Commission

Matthew C. Patrick  
Executive Director  
Westport River Watershed Alliance

CC: Secretary Rick Sullivan  
NEFMC Executive Director Paul J. Howard  
DMF Director Paul Diodati  
DMF Deputy Director David E. Pierce  
State Senate President Therese Murray  
Speaker Robert DeLeo