

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 1, 2002

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 Capitol
Washington, D.C.20510

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Young
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-218 Capitol
Washington, D.C.20510

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Senator Stevens,
Dear Chairman Young and Congressman Obey,

We are writing to seek your support as conferees on H.R.4475, the Supplemental Appropriations Act, for Section 210, as passed by the Senate, to provide a \$500,000 loan guarantee for a West Coast groundfish fishing capacity reduction program of up to \$50,000,000, to be financed by industry through a federal loan program. The \$500,000 appropriation for this program is offset by funds previously appropriated for Oregon groundfish research; *No new funds are necessary.*

The West Coast groundfish fishery has a significant capacity problem as a result of federal decisions imposing substantial reductions in allowable catch, and these problems will become more severe this year. The cause of these reductions was primarily a miscalculation of the allowable catch in combination due to lack of knowledge about the longevity of the species. While groundfish on the East Coast have 7-8 year life cycles, the National Marine Fisheries Service has found some West Coast groundfish species live 90 or more years. This lack of critical information about groundfish biology led the federal government to allow serious over-harvesting of the stock.

As part of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's strategic plan, capacity reduction ranks as the number one priority in addressing the West Coast groundfish fishery disaster. The capacity reduction program funded by this amendment will significantly reduce fishing capacity by permanently removing boats AND groundfish permits, as well as related state permits, held by the boat owners. The result would be the reduction, by approximately half, of the total fishing capacity, through a voluntary system. The boats will lose their fishing endorsement and no new entrants would be allowed into the fishery. It is a plan created and supported by local and regional participants in the West Coast groundfish fishery.

The capacity reduction program would be open to all participants in the groundfish fishery from Washington, Oregon, and California, and would fit within the scope of a national approach to funding capacity reduction under section 312(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Once again, this program is very critical to the management of the West Coast groundfish fishery, and we ask for your support in keeping this critical budget-neutral program in the bill when it is passed in conference.

If you have any questions or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact Senator Ron Wyden, Senator Gordon Smith, or Senator Patty Murray, or their staffs, Gerhard Kuska (Wyden) 4-5062, Matt Hill (Smith) 4-8319 or Anna Knudson (Murray) 4-2621.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray

Ron Wyden

~~Curt~~

Lori Capps

Brick Bri

Rick Larsen

Earl Blumen

Tom Lantos

J. Anshu Anna Eskoo

