

Bruce May  
313 Wareham st.  
Middleboro,MA 02346

508-946-4048

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Chair Tierney and Members of the Task Force:  
and Gov. Romney:

I am a fisherman in Massachusetts as well as my wife and 2 children and I would like to give some comments on the Ocean Management Task Force's draft statement. I agree with the stand that groups like The Mass. Striped Bass assoc. are taking regarding the Freedom to Fish act and I hope there will be no misleading statements in the final draft of the Ocean managements task force statement.

I am very much against any law which would close areas of our ocean off to fishing. That would be very unfair in my opinion and will not be tolerated by the millions of fishermen and women.

I am copying a statement that I am sure you have recieved from several people by now because I agree with it and I hope you can do right thing.

I am a Massachusetts fishermen and I am very troubled by some of the statements, and their implications, found in the Ocean Management Task Force's draft statement of principles, recommendations, and statements of justification for the recommendations.

I find the statement of justification for recommendation # 9 regarding the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) performance regarding data collection and the management of marine resources grossly misleading. This appears to be an attempt by some members of the Task Force such as Priscilla Brooks of the Conservation Law Foundation and Jack Clarke of the Massachusetts Audubon Society to promote a radical political agenda of seeking a law that mandates the state to shut down up to 25% of all marine waters to all fishing - permanently. In order to improve the fisheries and habitat data collection and management, the state simply needs to give DMF the resources necessary to enhance the work it does rather than arbitrarily closing vast areas of the state waters to all fishing, as I believe the organizations mentioned above are attempting to do.

Additionally, existing federal and state law mandates that fish, shellfish, and other forms of marine life be conserved, protected, and restored. Citizens and other interested parties have the ability to seek legal relief when these laws are not enforced. These laws, such as the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993 are already leading to

significantly improved marine resource restoration and protection with further improvement being projected.

Language in recommendations 1, 2, 4, 9, 10 and 13, and their statements of justification will, if unchanged, lead the Task Force into areas that the Task Force has repeatedly stated it will not get involved in; fisheries management and ocean zoning. Chair Tierney stated at the October 17th meeting that the Task Force would not get involved in these areas. This assertion can also be found in the PowerPoint presentation given at the public hearings. Again, the continued inclusion of language that is directly or indirectly related to fisheries management appears to be nothing more than a concerted effort by Ms. Brooks and Mr. Clarke to promote their own political agenda. Frankly, it concerns me greatly that this fisheries specific verbiage remains included the Task Force's work when the fishing communities, both recreational and commercial, have been assured at least twice that the task force would not get involved in it?

I would not be surprised if Ms. Brooks and Mr. Clarke try to deny that their objective is to get the Task Force involved in fisheries management. They may claim that their interest lies in 'biodiversity' (which is on the increase in New England waters according to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center), 'ecosystem protection' (for which there is still a lack of agreement on a comprehensive definition), 'habitat protections' (again, at least in terms of fishing-related activity already mandated under existing law), or 'research' (which scientific literature finds that it is not feasible to close areas to all existing fishing activity and expect valid results).

You should also be aware that many of the organizations involved in promoting the concept of no-fishing zones are seeking them for reasons that have nothing to do with the biological health of the marine environment. Ocean Conservancy, an organization with close links to Conservation Law Foundation often states in public that their desire for no-fishing zones is related to the biological health of the oceans. Yet, their published position is that they also seek closed areas for their "spiritual and intrinsic value".

Don't take the bait being offered by these environmental organizations. The concept of permanent no-fishing zones is already being debated in the Massachusetts Statehouse and Congress. Conservation Law Foundation is part of a documented consortium of national environmental organizations attempting to force vast, permanent area closures on the nation's 17 million fishermen. Do not allow these organizations and their employees who serve on the Task Force to manipulate the Task Force in to making "back door" recommendations that are contrary to its stated objectives. To do so only involves in a contentious issue that the Task Force has spent essentially no time investigating or contemplating. I urge you to reject all language that will make recommendations specifically intended to impact fisheries management. Instead, I hope that the Task Force will focus its efforts on real issues facing the Commonwealth that do need to be addressed such as the impact of the placement of permanent structures in marine waters, pollution, and public access.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Bruce May