



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Joseph Cimino (NJ), Chair

Dan McKiernan (MA), Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal, Executive Director

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

January 25, 2024

The Honorable Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is pleased to support your goal of protecting working waterfronts from rezoning, redevelopment, and the effects of climate change.

ASMFC is a Compact of the 15 Atlantic coastal states that manage nearshore marine fisheries that occupy multiple states' waters. ASMFC serves as a deliberative body for the states to collectively decide how to manage their shared marine resources. Our group of Commissioners is comprised of public servants, scientists, fishermen, and more, all working to ensure the sound conservation and management of their shared coastal fishery resources.

Access to working waterfronts for the commercial, for-hire industries, and the multitudes of industries that support them, is essential to the viability of coastal communities, their culture, and their economies. One of our member states, Maine, has had a working waterfront access protection program since the mid-2000s. Maine provides funding to entities on a competitive basis in exchange for a covenant that restricts future use of the property to commercial fishing activities.

Just as commercial fishing supports a network of downstream businesses, those that support commercial fishing should also be considered for protection. These include but are not limited to boatbuilders, boatyards, marinas, and gear storage locations. Federal legislation should also consider a requirement for permanent protection of properties via easements or covenants for those receiving funding. Without permanent protection, there is a risk that these improved waterfronts face increased redevelopment pressure. If the infrastructure is lost to redevelopment, we will lose future generations of fishermen.

One of the ways the Maine Working Waterfront Access Protection Program is evaluated is on a project's "capacity to create new shoreside jobs." Commercial fisheries provide access to affordable US-caught seafood far inland and around the globe. These properties help support a vast network of restaurants and fish markets. The for-hire fishing industry also provides unique recreational access for people who may not otherwise go fishing. It can be a gateway and learning opportunity for the public. Investments in working waterfronts preserve these valuable services.

For the immeasurable cultural and economic benefits they provide, we support the creation of a federal working waterfront protection program. We look forward to meeting with your staff to discuss these items further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Beal".