



June 10, 2016

Chairman Rick Robins, Executive Director Chris Moore,
Ecosystems and Ocean Planning Committee Chairman G. Warren Elliot
Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, Delaware 19901

Dear Chairman Robins, Executive Director Moore, and Committee Chairman Elliot,

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) applauds the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in advocating for the protection of unmanaged forage species in mid-Atlantic federal waters. We are writing to support your Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment (UFOA). This amendment represents an important step towards maintaining a healthy ecosystem through the prevention of unregulated commercial harvesting of forage species until the Council has had an adequate opportunity to assess the scientific information relating to any new or expanded fisheries and consider potential impacts to existing fisheries, fishing communities, and the marine ecosystem.

MyRWA is a grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Mystic River and its tributaries, which flow into Boston Harbor. We are in the midst of our annual river Herring Run and recently witnessed with the arrival of the herring, great blue and black-crowned night herons, bald eagles, osprey, cormorants, herring gulls, and striped bass. River herring, a forage species, plays a crucial role in ensuring that our watershed's ecosystem remains viable. In 2015 alone, our herring monitoring program galvanized the interest of dozens of volunteers who counted nearly 60,000 individuals of a run estimated at nearly 500,000 in total.

Recent management progress has been made in the conservation of certain forage fish, such as mackerel and menhaden. Nonetheless, forage species such as krill, anchovies, sand lance, chub mackerel and false albacore lack management plans. Given the growing demand for fish oil, feed for livestock and aquaculture and bait these unmanaged species are at risk from large-scale commercial fishing and therefore need to be protected. We are also concerned about the trophic consequences of the large-scale removal of forage species.

The specific alternatives within the UFOA that we support can be found in the letter to be dated June 17, 2016 submitted by the Herring Alliance, which we have cosigned. In addition to those alternatives, we ask that you consider as part of the forthcoming assessment of your marine ecosystem the role of climate change. Finally, we wish to thank you for your leadership regarding unmanaged forage species. It will serve as a model for the New England Fishery Management Council.

Sincerely,

EkOngKar Singh Khalsa, Executive Director
Mystic River Watershed Association

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