

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



Mayor Calls NOAA Decision to Transfer Tainted Agent to Nation's Top-Value Port "Ill-advised, uninformed, insensitive" and "retaliatory."

"We're apprehensive about anyone who was involved in the abuses that were documented in the inspector general's report now being transferred to New Bedford." -- Mayor Lang

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts - January 1, 2011 - Mayor Scott Lang has criticized NOAA's decision to reassign an employee involved in prosecutorial abuses to the nation's top-value fishing port.

Susan Williams, a criminal investigator in the NOAA's Boston/Chelsea fisheries law enforcement office is in the process of being reassigned to the agency's New Bedford office, several sources inside and outside NOAA confirmed to the New Bedford Standard-Times.

Mayor Lang called the decision "ill-advised, uninformed, insensitive" and "retaliatory." The cities of New Bedford and Gloucester, the nation's highest-value and oldest seaports, respectively, are currently suing NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke for the agency's implementation of the Obama Administration's "catch share" fisheries management policy. Called "sector management," it has encouraged consolidation of the New England ground-fish fleet into the hands of the largest and wealthiest vessel owners, causing unemployment, and wreaking economic havoc in the two cities.

Ms. Williams played a role in an infamous three-year prosecution of the Gloucester Seafood Display Auction, which drove a wedge between the fishing community and NOAA's law enforcement arm, and was one of the reasons members of Congress demanded an investigation by the Commerce Department's inspector general.

That investigation concluded with findings of prosecutorial abuse and selective prosecution in the New England fishery, which NOAA chief Jane Lubchenco has pledged to correct. However, repeated decisions to transfer rather than fire employees involved in the abuses,

has caused the fishing industry to doubt Dr. Lubchenco's sincerity and has raised the wrath of both Republican and Democratic members of Congress who represent coastal communities from Maine to North Carolina.

Late last year, in a sworn deposition in the Gloucester auction case, special agent Michael R. Henry testified that higher-ups at NOAA, including Williams, participated in drafting a misleading affidavit to obtain a search warrant from an administrative judge.

"We're apprehensive about anyone who was involved in the abuses that were documented in the inspector general's report now being transferred to New Bedford," Mayor Lang told the Standard-Times.

Lang said the local NOAA office, unlike Gloucester, enjoys a good, solid relationship with the fishing fleet.

"The individuals who work out of New Bedford, by and large, are highly respected by the fishing community," Lang said. "To bring someone into the mix [who was] part of the inspector general's focus is something that I don't quite understand."

"She should be monitoring freshwater pike in the Great Lakes," not assigned to the No. 1 value fishing port in the nation, he said.