



## **East Coast Members of Congress to Meet with Commerce Secretary on Fishing Issues**

**WHAT: Congressional Meeting with Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke to Discuss Fishing Industry Issues**

**WHEN: Thursday, September 23rd, 2010 -- 3pm. The meeting is closed to press. However, Members will be available after for comment.**

On Thursday, September 23rd, Congressmen Barney Frank, along with other members of House and Senate from North Carolina to Maine, and representatives of the fishing industry, will meet with Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke to discuss critical issues facing the industry.

The meeting requested by Congressman Frank will focus on working towards resolving several important issues such as the Secretary of Commerce's authority to issue emergency regulations to increase the allowable catch of important "choke species" stocks to prevent a premature closing of the Northeast ground fishery, and how to address Congressional concerns related to NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement.

### **Statement by Congressman Frank**

"Earlier this summer, I called for Dr. Lubchenco's resignation because I was dissatisfied with how fish regulations were being administered. I subsequently withdrew that statement after White House officials stated that the call for her removal was a drastic step that they do not wish to take, and that they believed the replacement of Dr. Lubchenco was unnecessary to correct the problems that concern me. They assured me that they understood my concerns and based on that assurance, and because my sole interest is achieving those changes, I agreed to continue working with the Administration."

"Since that time we've been engaged in several discussions with Secretary Locke, who has direct oversight over the fishing service, and with the help of [New Bedford Mayor] Scott Lang, [UMass Professor] Dr. Brian Rothschild, leaders in the fishing industry, and especially my colleague John Tierney, we have made our case to the Administration."

"Congressman Tierney and I have called for the Administration to take the following actions at the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE): impose disciplinary action on individuals who the Inspector General (IG) has stated acted inappropriately within OLE, including the head of law enforcement; address problems with the OLE Asset Forfeiture Fund and the system that incentivized the practice of excessive fines that were then used to purchase equipment and fund travel expenses creating a conflict of interest; and reopen old cases where the IG has documented unfairness."

"In addition to addressing choke stocks and problems within the Office of Law Enforcement, I will also advocate changing the rules that factor economic impact in management decisions and urge

the Secretary to begin the process of looking at NOAA and NFMS regulations that have been used as a justification not to use the statutory authority provided in Magnuson-Stevens to set higher catch limits."

"I am pleased that the Secretary Locke has been leading this effort, and I look forward to meeting with him on Thursday to see if our assurances are being made concrete. I hope to learn definitively on Thursday that this is happening. If not, I will work with my colleagues to pursue our goals through other means."