



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

April 9, 2015

Mr. Richard B. Robins, Jr.
Chairman
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
5103 Mariners Cove
Suffolk, VA 23435

Mr. E. F. Stockwell, III
Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street; Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Rick and Terry:

The purpose of this letter is to communicate our enthusiastic endorsement of the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils' recent decisions to reestablish the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP). We believe that this Panel will serve an excellent means of bringing together commercial fishing, fishery survey, and fishery management professionals to identify concerns about regional research survey performance, to identify ways to address those concerns, and to promote mutual understanding of the results of this work.

We would like to encourage the Councils to move forward with the planning for the Panel's work. In an effort to help initiate the discussion, we propose the following three primary focus areas for the Panel: (1) understanding the performance of the current NOAA/NEFSC research survey trawl; (2) evaluating the potential for supplementing or complementing current surveys using alternative vessels and/or other gear configurations, through cooperative research (this work would also support the need for developing protocols to maintain survey data continuity when survey vessels are replaced); and (3) improving understanding and acceptance of NOAA/NEFSC survey data quality and use of survey data. We believe that these are areas in which the contributions of the Panel's diverse membership can be very constructive and effective. We appreciate the opportunity to share our initial thinking on these topics for the Panel's deliberation, and we look forward to working together with the Councils on an integrated plan at the June Council meetings.

Sincerely,

William A. Karp, Ph.D.
Science and Research Director

cc: J. Bullard
C. Moore
T. Nies

