

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Scott P. Brown
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: S.3641, National Endowment for the Oceans Act of 2010

Dear Senator Brown:

We are writing to request that you co-sponsor and support S.3642, National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO) Act.

The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) is a nonprofit organization that represents municipal environmental agencies in all 351 cities and towns across the Commonwealth. We provide training, counseling and informational resources on environmental and land preservation matters to hundreds of municipal organizations and thousands of committed volunteers. We also advocate and support laws and regulations at the federal level to protect the most critical natural resources. Massachusetts has long been a national leader in protecting water resources, through the Wetlands Protection Act administered by conservation commissions. MACC's constituents manage these public resources for the benefit of all.

Our oceans are the most imperiled ecosystems on Earth. The NEO would set aside monies collected from permitting and other fees for uses incompatible with marine biodiversity protection and would set aside those monies in a dedicated fund to protect, conserve, restore and understand the oceans and coasts. Such funding is critically important to Massachusetts, where coastal waters total 1.6 million acres, an area roughly one-third the size of the state. These waters support 152,000 jobs and provide \$4.3 billion dollars of revenue each year.

There have been two remarkable policy changes in the past two years to protect Massachusetts and US marine waters:

- (1) Massachusetts enacted a new law to proactively plan for use of our oceans. Ahead of the rest of the country, we developed a landmark Ocean Management Plan that plans for specific types of development activities and foster environmentally sustainable uses in Massachusetts waters, while protecting valuable marine resources.

(2) The US has a new ocean policy that plans for the protection of federal waters through coastal and marine spatial planning. Previously, more than 20 federal agencies applied 140 laws in pursuit of individual mandates. Today, spatial planning allows for transparent decisions about how to manage conflicting uses while maintaining and restoring ocean health. A new National Ocean Council is coordinating those agencies and limiting recreational and commercial activities to designated zones to be overseen by new regional organizations.

Now that we have planned to protect our state and federal waters, we need to proactively make sure our marine ecosystems are resilient and healthy. Such action will allow marine ecosystems to become more resistant to climate change impacts, such as acidification from excess carbon, overfishing as well as natural and human made disasters.

Massachusetts has been a leader in protecting its unique maritime heritage and valuable coastal economy. We hope that you will continue this tradition by co-sponsoring S.3642, National Endowment for the Oceans.

Thank you for your attention on this important matter.

Very truly yours,



Patrick Garner
President MACC

Linda Orel
Executive Director MACC