



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

**DEC 17 2018**

Thomas A. Nies  
Executive Director  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Tom:

On October 1, 2018, we received a request for approval of a new Northeast multispecies sector for fishing year 2019. I request that the Council add this to the agenda for discussion at the next upcoming Groundfish Committee meeting as well as the January 2019 Council meeting in order for us to complete the necessary consultation with the Council.

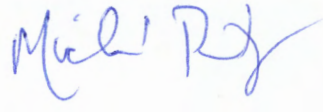
Sectors are required to submit operations plans to us in advance of the new fishing year. We refer to these operations plans when considering whether to approve the sector to operate and allocate Annual Catch Entitlement to the sector. This year's deadline for operations plan submissions was October 1, 2018. We received operations plan submissions for all existing sectors, with the exception of Northeast Fishery Sector IX. We also received one proposed operations plan for the formation of a new sector, submitted by the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance. As it is currently drafted, the operations plan is comparable to existing operations plans and falls within the scope of the fishing years 2015-2020 Northeast multispecies sectors Programmatic Environmental Assessment. It includes all of the necessary components and warrants further consideration. Therefore, we are notifying the Council consistent with the required process for new sectors.

The Council modified the approval process for new sectors as part of Framework Adjustment 55 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Under the revised process, we must notify the Council of the proposed sector request in writing and, subsequently, present the proposed sector operations plan and supporting documentation at a future Groundfish Committee meeting and Council meeting. Following review of the request, the Council must provide any comments to us in writing; we will make the final determination after considering the Council's feedback. We may not approve the formation of the new sector without the Council's endorsement.

If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Heil, Groundfish Team Supervisor, at (978) 281-9257.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Pentony", is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Michael Pentony  
Regional Administrator