

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** July 1, 2008  
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## **Maine Governor's Top Choice for Fishery Council Cast Aside by NOAA**

The recent appointment of a lobbyist for the industrial herring fleet to the Maine seat on the New England Fishery Management Council has created a wave of concern about fisheries up and down the region. An announcement issued by NOAA on Friday, June 27, 2008 rejected Gary Libby, Governor Baldacci's and Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Lapointe's top pick.

Gary Libby is a lifelong commercial fisherman from Port Clyde who many believed would move the management of New England's fisheries in a positive direction, and whose principles and vision to break the status quo and alter the basic business model currently dominating groundfishing garnered wide support both within and outside of the state of Maine. His effort to switch from catching large volumes of low-quality fish and selling in a large regional market to catching lower volumes of high-quality fish delivered directly to consumers has been applauded by fishing communities in the region.

"Gary's participation on the council would have added a critically important voice for the long-term health of the resource and Maine's fishing communities as well as for community-based fishermen throughout the region," said Robin Alden, former Commissioner of Maine Department of Marine Resources and former member of the New England Fishery Management Council.

Like other states in the region, Maine's marine-resource agency recommends the names of qualified candidates to the governor; he then sends the official state list of candidates to NOAA and the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, who can make the final selections from anyone on that list.

"The Maine Department of Marine Resources had every opportunity to ensure that Maine was properly represented," stated Zack Klyver, member of the CHOIR Coalition and a Bar Harbor-based whale-watch naturalist who supported Gary Libby. "We advised them to nominate only candidates who brought a more sustainable vision for New England's fisheries. Apparently, endorsements from Governor Baldacci, Commissioner Lapointe and over 30 other key marine-stakeholder organizations weren't sufficient for NOAA and the Secretary of Commerce to appoint Mr. Libby."

"The appointment of Mary Beth Tooley, a lobbyist for the largest industrial midwater-trawl vessels in the region, could have been nipped in the bud right here in Maine," said Craig Pendleton, a lifelong fisherman from Saco, Maine. "Unfortunately, Commissioner Lapointe and Governor Baldacci chose to include Mrs. Tooley in the list of nominations to NOAA in the face of vast opposition from traditional commercial and recreational fishermen, ecotourism companies, and conservationists. While the final decision was made in D.C., the first mistakes were propagated in Hallowell and Augusta. If Maine is ever to end the dominance of the big industrial fleet and have balanced representation on the New England Fishery Management Council, then the DMR and the Governor need to stop nominating big-industry lobbyists!"

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From individual fishermen as far south as Martha's Vineyard and as far east as Eastport, commercial and recreational fishing groups across the region, national and regional environmental organizations, and Maine state legislators all came together to back Mr. Libby.

"Seldom has such a cross-section of the New England fishing communities, legislators and environmental organizations agreed on a council appointment. This is due to the ethics, vision and on-the-water experience that Gary would have brought to the table," said Jennifer Litteral, Director of Marine Programs for the Island Institute.

The councils, established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, prepare fishery-management plans for marine fish populations around the nation. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service implements the management plans on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce. New council members will be seated at the August 11, 2008 NEFMC meeting.

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Note: Mr. Libby had received endorsements from the Maine and Downeast Lobstermen's Associations, the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, the Penobscot East Resource Center, Maine Association of Charterboat Captains, the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association, the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association, the Recreational Fishing Alliance, and the CHOIR Coalition. He also had the endorsement of many conservation and nonprofit groups such as the Island Institute, the Conservation Law Foundation, Environmental Defense and the Herring Alliance that includes Greenpeace, Earthjustice, Natural Resources Defense Council and National Coalition for Marine Conservation.

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