

2006 Hookers Ball Fund-a-Need
Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association Atlantic Herring Campaign

Presented to attendees of the Hookers Ball on August 12, 2006
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For nearly a decade, the Hook Fishermen's Association has been concerned with the status of the Atlantic Herring fishery. Although herring is a small fish, it plays a crucial role in the ecosystem. Responsible management of herring and a sustainable harvest of herring are essential to the success of all of the other species of fish and mammals that inhabit the waters off of our shores.

Right now there is a fleet of large ships that is removing herring from the inshore at an alarming rate. These massive, indiscriminant midwater trawl vessels are approximately 100 feet long, and sometimes work in pairs to catch herring. Unfortunately, their catch is not limited to herring, and we know that these ships are also catching juvenile groundfish and marine mammals. A few of you in the room this evening may be able to draw the parallel between these ships and the foreign fleets of the 1970's.

The fishing patterns employed by the midwater fleet are ruining the ecosystem by removing the food source of countless other animals. Without an abundance of food, tuna move offshore and become more difficult to catch. Whales no longer spend the summer months in the inshore Gulf of Maine. We now believe that local river herring runs have been decimated because the river herring are being caught and killed when they go to sea to spawn.

Fishermen in our ports, as well as their counterparts throughout Massachusetts and Maine, are reporting a dire situation. The midwater fleet is here, the vessels are close to shore, and they are destroying the profitability of local fishing businesses.

We've watched the midwater trawlers destroy our ecosystem and our economy. Now is the time to capture hard evidence of their destructive fishing practices and eliminate these ships from our traditional fishing grounds. Because of budget cuts to the federal observer program, the midwater fleet is fishing unobserved, and no one has a good grasp of exactly how much waste the fleet is producing. It is appalling, and it needs to stop.

As a community who cares about the health of our herring resource, and the health of our oceans at large, we have the opportunity tonight to raise funds and send a message that we won't sit by and permit these vessels from destroying our ecosystem. We need to increase scrutiny; we need to expand the coalition of existing groups who want to protect herring; and more than anything we need to document through photos and videos exactly what the midwater fleet is doing.

By exposing the destruction, we can force a change. With your help, we can build upon the sacrifices, hard work and hope that communities such as ours have committed towards a sustainable future. It is a future where communities are entrusted with the stewardship of marine resources, and I believe that by working together we can avoid a catastrophic outcome. We can do this.