



Keep the Cape voice

Appoint Dempsey to fisheries management council

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For the past 10 years, the New England Fisheries Management Council has been well served by a long-time Cape fisherman. John Pappalardo, CEO of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fisherman's Association, has served on the multi-state board with distinction.

Because of term limits, however, Pappalardo must step down this spring.

Fortunately, Tom Dempsey, policy director for the hook fisherman's association, has been nominated to replace Pappalardo. He has earned the support of the entire Cape and Islands legislative delegation as well as many fishing organizations, both commercial and recreational.

If Dempsey is not selected to replace Pappalardo, the Cape's population of commercial fishermen, which derive their living from the sea, will be disenfranchised from the decision-making process that most affects their lives.

Currently, no other council member that represents commercial fishing interests is based on the Cape, which has a unique small day-boat fishery. The fishery requires a different set of considerations from the larger off-shore fleets based in Gloucester and New Bedford.

So, first of all, the council needs a hook and line representative. The overwhelming majority of council members represent dragners or trawlers.

Secondly, Dempsey is well qualified for the position. A 2002 graduate of Dartmouth, with a bachelor's in environmental biology, Dempsey went on to the University of Alaska at Fairbanks to earn a master's in wildlife biology. He was a fellow of the National Science Foundation from 2005-06.

Two years later, he landed the job at the hook fishermen's association in Chatham. As policy director, Dempsey advocated forward-looking regulatory policies, which support the conservation and restoration of regional fish stocks as well as a diverse and profitable fishing fleet on Cape Cod.

He participated in a wide range of public meetings regarding state, regional and federal fisheries management and worked with fishermen to inform local, state and federal policy-makers of issues affecting Cape Cod's fishing fleet.

In a statement about his guiding philosophy on the conservation and management of marine resources, Dempsey wrote that "consistent and short-sighted over-harvesting of our commercial stocks during the last century has resulted in their near-universal depletion." He said many of the stocks are only now beginning to rebuild, despite more than a decade of increasing restrictions on fisheries.

"It is therefore important to remain vigilant in our efforts to continue the long-term recovery of marine resources while also allowing the fishing industry to benefit from years of shared sacrifice," he said.

Unfortunately, Dempsey said the current state of fisheries and marine resource management in New England closely mirrors the broader political atmosphere nationally.

"Divisive discussions over regulations or fisheries science are, too often, driven by rhetoric and accusations instead of innovative ideas," he said. "If we are to succeed in our obligations to be careful stewards of the marine ecosystem and our fisheries, our first job must be to take meaningful steps to restore trust and rebuild the foundation of mutual respect that is fundamental in the partnership between our industry and marine resource managers."

Gov. Deval Patrick must forward council nominations to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. Mr. Secretary, there is no need to go on a fishing expedition to replace Pappalardo. Dempsey is your man.

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