



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20230

October 2, 2008

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senate
SR-154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1903

Dear Senator Snowe:

The Office of Inspector General is preparing to assess issues associated with the work and scientific methods of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center in response to your letter concerning the center, dated August 28, 2008. We discussed your request for a review with your staff in a September 10 meeting and in a subsequent phone conversation, and have refined the scope of our project, as follows:

1. We will evaluate NMFS' implementation of National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which requires that conservation and management measures in fishery management plans be based on the best scientific information available. In particular, we will concentrate our efforts on specific fishing industry concerns your staff shared with us questioning whether the Northeast Fisheries Science Center used the best available science. We will focus on the two fisheries that generated the most concerns—northeast groundfish (Atlantic cod, haddock, pollock, and yellowtail flounder) and Atlantic sea scallops. Our objective will be to assess the extent to which the science-based management process has been effectively implemented in these fisheries.
2. To address your concerns that NMFS has denied the fishing industry access to underlying scientific data, we will examine data access issues, including the transparency of NMFS' procedures for responding to data requests, the timeliness of its responses, and the appropriateness of costs it charges to process requests.

We will coordinate our work with Michael Conathan, Professional Staff Member for the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard, and give him periodic updates as our review progresses. An identical letter has been sent to Senators Kennedy, Collins, and Kerry.

If you have any questions regarding our review, please feel free to contact me at (202) 482-4661, or Lisa Allen, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Inspections and Program Evaluations, at (202) 482-5422.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd J. Zinser".

Todd J. Zinser





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20230

October 2, 2008

The Honorable John F. Kerry
United States Senate
SR-304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2102

Dear Senator Kerry:

The Office of Inspector General is preparing to assess issues associated with the work and scientific methods of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center in response to your letter concerning the center, dated August 28, 2008. We discussed your request for a review with your staff in a September 10 meeting and in a subsequent phone conversation, and have refined the scope of our project, as follows:

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20230

October 2, 2008

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate
SR-317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2101

Dear Senator Kennedy:

The Office of Inspector General is preparing to assess issues associated with the work and scientific methods of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center in response to your letter concerning the center, dated August 28, 2008. We discussed your request for a review with your staff in a September 10 meeting and in a subsequent phone conversation, and have refined the scope of our project, as follows:

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20230

October 2, 2008

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
United States Senate
SD-413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1904

Dear Senator Collins:

The Office of Inspector General is preparing to assess issues associated with the work and scientific methods of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center in response to your letter concerning the center, dated August 28, 2008. We discussed your request for a review with your staff in a September 10 meeting and in a subsequent phone conversation, and have refined the scope of our project, as follows:

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