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JOINT RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING THE DELEGATION OF THE 2007 NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL TO USE THE AREA MANAGEMENT CONCEPT FOR GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

your Memorialists, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-third Legislature of the State of Maine now assembled in the First Regular Session, most respectfully present and petition the delegates to the 2007 New England Fishery Management Council as follows:

WHEREAS, the rich and fabled fishing grounds of the American northeast coast first brought from the Old World to the New World Europeans who found the abundance that became the foundation of New England; and

WHEREAS, the legendary abundance of cod and other Gulf of Maine groundfish provided the bounty that sustained thousands of hardy Maine deepwater fishermen sailing seasonally from hundreds of Maine harbors; and

WHEREAS, in the last half century, the groundfish stock within the Gulf of Maine has suffered a sad depletion and has not rebounded as it has in other regions, which threatens the economy of Maine's historic fishing communities and inflicts economic hardships for Maine's remaining groundfishing families today; and

WHEREAS, as a symbol of this decline, in the 10 years from 1996 to 2006 alone Maine's active federal groundfishing permits have declined in number from 165 to 91, a dramatic 45% decline; and

WHEREAS, such impacts are reflected in the continuing loss and declining numbers of shoreside support industries, including ice suppliers, fuel vendors, fish buyers and processors, fishing gear shops, bait suppliers, boat repair businesses and transport firms, among others, and the accompanying value each added; and

WHEREAS, this loss of fish and the loss of fishing livelihoods has occurred under the current approach to management, known as "Days at Sea," which limits the number of days permit holders may go to sea and make legal landings of their catch; and

WHEREAS, "Days at Sea" has not, in the judgment of your Memorialists, achieved the overarching goal of fisheries management, which is to ensure the regeneration of long-term abundance of groundfish in the Gulf of Maine and in the New England region and to thus rebuild the equitable redistribution of our fisheries resource among fishing communities and economies; and

WHEREAS, the New England Fishery Management Council has asked for public proposals for alternative systems of management for the New England fishery to provide for a more sustainable, renewable and equitable distribution of our historic fishing resources; and

WHEREAS, a diverse regional coalition of Maine and New England stakeholders has thus formed, including fishermen, scientists, interested citizens and conservation and harvesting interests, and

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has proposed a new system of resource management that meets the New England Fishery Management Council requirements, entitled "Area Management"; and

WHEREAS, "Area Management" takes into account the ecological differences between ocean regions and species and aligns the economic incentives of the fishing business with ecologically sound practices to promote greater accountability, ecological sustainability and an enduring long-term fishing industry for New England, embracing the widespread environmental, economic and social good; and

WHEREAS, the concept of "Area Management" offers the best promise to rebuild our once-fertile fishing grounds, to sustain our State's fishermen, to replenish traditional fishing stocks, to provide for the ancient livelihood of our coastal communities up and down the rugged reaches of the Gulf of Maine and to provide abundant harvests and healthy food for the present and future citizens of our nation from the waters of New England; now, therefore, be it

That We, your Memorialists, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to request the delegates from the State of Maine to the 2007 New England Fishery Management Council to support the "Area Management" concept and actively advocate for an "Area Management" concept of groundfish management for the benefit of all who now and in days to come "go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters"; and be it further

That suitable copies of this resolution, duly authenticated by the Secretary of State, be transmitted to John Pappalardo, Chairman of the New England Fishery Management Council, to Rip Cunningham, Chairman of the Multispecies (Groundfish) Committee, to Paul Howard, Executive Director of the New England Fishery Management Council, to Pat Kurkul, Regional Director of the National Marine Fishery Service, to each member of the New England Fishery Management Council and to each member of the Maine Congressional Delegation.