August 26, 2022

Dr. Richard Spinrad  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Ms. Janet Coit  
NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator  
1315 East-West Highway 14th Floor  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Spinrad and Ms. Coit:

On August 16, 2022, President Joseph Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) into law. Title V of this law provides $2.6 billion to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Councils encourage you to use part of these funds to address shortfalls in data collection for marine fishery stock assessments. These assessments are crucial for supporting a key element of the Blue Economy: commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing that generated 1.8 million jobs and added $117 billion to the nation’s economy in 2019.

Over the last several years, rising costs have made it difficult to acquire the resources needed to support reliable fishery stock assessments. This includes shortfalls in the data necessary for assessments and the personnel needed to complete them. This nationwide problem could be addressed with IRA funds.

The importance of collecting these data and increasing funding for stock assessments cannot be overemphasized and should not be overshadowed by a focus on new technologies. Fisheries are on the front line of climate change. Better data, and the ability to process that data efficiently, will reduce the uncertainty in our assessments, increase the adaptive capacity of the Councils and NMFS to respond to these changes, and ultimately increase the benefits to the nation from a thriving fishing industry, in all its forms.

Fishing has been a key economic driver for coastal communities for centuries and is a key economic and cultural element in many underserved communities. With the appropriate investments in data collection and assessments, fisheries will continue to support those communities and the American public.
The Regional Fishery Management Councils urge NOAA to use IRA funds to support the oldest, and arguably one of the most publicly visible, part of the nation’s Blue Economy.

Sincerely,

Mike Luisi, Chair  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  

Eric Reid, Chair  
New England Fishery Management Council  

Melvin Bell, Chair  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  

Dale Diaz, Chair  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  

Marcos Hanke, Chair  
Caribbean Fishery Management Council  

Simon Kinneen, Chair  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  

Marc Gorelnik, Chair  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  

Archie Taotasi Soliai, Chair  
Western Pacific Fishery Management Council