

August 5, 2015

Dear Council Members,

My name is Timmy Froelich. I have been a commercial fisherman for 30 years. I live on Long Island, NY, and participate in a variety of inshore fisheries, monkfish and bluefish to name a few. I am also a Monkfish Advisor. I am writing because something needs to be done about the bluefish.

The summer time used to be the largest historical quota period where the most bluefish were landed and the fish were worth the most money.

Only 60-70 % of the entire coast wide quota for bluefish is being harvested, while some individual states are harvesting 100% of their allocation. Fisherman like me are being restrained severely. There are states that don't catch 20 - 30% of their quota allocation. I am not asking for a reallocation of the quota, I am asking to allow other states access to the quota that is not being caught.

We are not fishing like we once did. We are using way less net than we used to. We use only three 600 ft. nets rather than almost 2 miles of net like we used to or else we would catch too much. In the summertime when the blue fish are worth a lot of money, it's a feast or famine fishery. One day you catch a load and the next day you catch none. We need access to the bluefish quota when we have access to the bluefish.

When we are not allowed to harvest the bluefish, it takes away my opportunity to target other fish. I can't catch the green Bonita anymore because I can't put the net in the water for fear of bluefish interaction. I won't be able to catch the striped bass when I need to catch them because the blue fish are so thick. In past years I have participated in the RSA auction to obtain bluefish quota. This allowed me to target other species and land my bluefish by catch.

If there was still an RSA program for bluefish I wouldn't be complaining today. I would have bought bluefish like I always did. I always felt better to give the fish back at the end of the year if I bought more than I used and make sure that I had enough to cover my overage. Throwing the fish over the side doesn't do the resource any good.

I understand and support the Council's action for discontinuing the RSA program. The cheating was bad and frustrating to other fisherman who participated in the program legally.

My frustration today is knowing that my state's bluefish allocation is likely to cause regulatory discard, and shut me out of fishing for other species, while the Federal quota won't be caught. Perhaps the states could be a little more generous in sharing of their unused quota until RAS quota becomes available again.

Thank you for your consideration.

Timmy Froelich