



## Sea Watch International, Ltd.

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To: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Committee  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Re: Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Excessive Share Amendment Public Hearing Document

Dear Committee Members:

Thank you for your request for comments on the Excessive Shares Amendment Public Comment document.

You are in receipt of a comment document submitted by Mr. Tom Alspach on behalf of Sea Watch International that details our concerns regarding the Excessive Shares Amendment Public Comment document. Mr. Alspach' comments accurately reflect the concerns of ownership and management team here at Sea Watch International in a manner which I do not possess. I would like to take this opportunity to add a perspective to those concerns from a Sales and Marketing view which has been my primary function for the past 34 years over my 37 year career SC/OQ fisheries.

As you are aware consolidation has occurred in the SC/OQ fishery on both the harvest side as well as the processor side. I have personally worked for six different entities in the clam business over the past 37 years, three prior to Amendment 8 and three post Amendment 8. The consolidation became more prevalent post Amendment 8 as consolidation was a primary reason for the amendment being passed. The fishery was over capitalized with too many old, unsafe and inefficient vessels and the processing side was over capitalized with old inefficient and in some cases unsafe processing facilities. The consolidation on both sides of the equation allowed for investment in larger more efficient and safer vessels as well as more productive and safer processing facilities.

The improvements in harvesting vessels and processing facilities have made the SC/OQ fishery of today far more consumer friendly because of the ability to maintain quality and food safety standards that are required in today's market place. These improvements have

come at great cost for those participants that decided to remain active in the industry by owning allocation, harvesting the resource, processing the resource, marketing the resource and supporting cooperative science. I hope that you are all aware of the industries continual participation and support of cooperative science to enhance and remove uncertainties that might exist in any fisheries management plan but if not I will offer a bit of context. Starting back in 1997 the National Fisheries Institute's Clam Committee has funded cooperative science for the SC/OQ Fishery which is now carried on by SCeMFiS, the Science Center for Marine Fisheries. From 2007 through 2012 Truex Enterprise, part of Sea Watch's ownership group funded the work on Georges Banks necessary for the FDA protocol which opened Georges Banks to the SC/OQ Fishery in 2013. Millions of dollars of industry money with direction from the NEFSC has supplemented government science to make "the best science available" for management of this fishery.

Having the position that I have had over all these years it has been my pleasure to tell the story of our FMP which enables the fishery to be managed sustainably which is the basis of MSA. In 2016 the SC/OQ fishery was certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council in less than 9 months from start to finish. I believe that you are aware that this time line was exceptionally fast compared to other fisheries. This was directly related to the successful management of the fishery over the last 29 years since the adoption of Amendment 8. I believe that the successful management of this fishery was also confirmed by the report given by Northern Economics at the April Council meeting in Avalon.

How should we define participation in the SC/OQ fishery? If I were to define it I would refer to the content in the paragraphs previously written. Investments in allocation, real dollars paid for allocation that others received from the government at no cost. Investment in larger, safer more efficient harvesting vessels that are more environmentally friendly. Investments in processing facilities that are safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly. Investments in people, communities with good paying jobs and health benefits, the Sea Watch umbrella itself employs over 700 people in six states. Investments in cooperative science to ensure sustainability. Investments in market development at home and beyond the US border, Canada, Mexico, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore. Investments since 2010 to try and get the FDA to remove processed shellfish from the EU Shellfish Ban so we can get our markets in Europe back. Investments to be made in Europe once the EU Shellfish Ban is lifted.

I painted this picture for you to substantiate my opposition to having Alternatives 5 and 6 in the public comment document that will be approved by the council at the upcoming June meeting. Two reasons for my opposition are fairness and confusion. I do not think it is fair to reward "Absentee" allocation owners when the market grows because of the investment made by "Active" participants. Do not be mistaken, there are no SMALL boats tied up out there waiting for someone to offload their catch. There are however "Absentee" allocation owners that received allocation from Amendment 8 that have not made any investments in the SC/OQ Fishery in the past 29. These "Absentee" allocation owners would be the only beneficiaries from Alternatives 5 and 6 at the expense of the harvesters, processors and ultimately the American consumer and our trading partners abroad. By developing a quota A & B based on historical catch from the previous year you are telling the real industry "participants" that all of the investment made over the past 29 years to grow the market are to benefit those who have made no investment.

If all allocation owners made the same decision years ago that the “Absentee” allocation owners made, we would not be sitting here having this discussion because there would be no fishery.

I think that Alternatives 5 and 6 would be confusing to people that do not understand the history of why Amendment 8 was approved, consolidation and management efficiencies. Alternatives 5 and 6 really do not address excessive shares but allow for “Absentee” allocation owners to benefit at the expense of active “participants” in the fishery who have made the substantial investments over time and ultimately burden the consumer with unnecessary cost increases. As our science tells us, there are plenty of clams in the SC/OQ Fishery to sustain the current quotas and when demand dictates it those currently unused allocation shares will be leased by someone or some entity.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the management process and I hope that you will share these comments through the briefing materials that will be distributed to the SC/OQ Committee and the full council.

Respectfully,

Guy B Simmons

*Guy B Simmons*

Sea Watch International

Senior VP of Marketing and Product Development

Cc: Christopher Moore

Jessica Coakley