Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2005

The Honorable Hector V. Barreto
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 Third Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Barreto:

We are writing on behalf of the more than 1,300 Maine fishermen and their families in York, Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, Waldo, Hancock, and Washington counties who have been affected by the closure of shellfish beds due to red tide. As you know, Maine waters are being plagued by the worst outbreak of red tide since 1972, which has resulted in the closure of most shellfish areas in the state. The duration of the closures is currently unknown.

Maine's shellfish industry is a critical part of Maine's economy, accounting for approximately $75 million annually in economic activity. The fishermen who rely on this natural resource depend heavily on the summer season to make the majority of their livelihood. It can take several weeks for shellfish to rid themselves of this toxin once the red tide is gone, but added to the duration of the red tide itself, this unknown period of closure will almost certainly create a disaster for our shellfish industry.

Governor John Baldacci of Maine has written to you expressing his intent to seek a declaration of economic injury in the affected counties. Upon receipt of the required economic information, we urge you to expedite preparation of a disaster analysis and the issuance of a disaster declaration.

The closure of these fisheries jeopardizes the livelihoods of the fishermen and businesses that benefit from Maine's shellfish industry. Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of these small Maine businesses.

Sincerely,

SUSAN M. COLLINS	THOMAS H. ALLEN	MICHAEL H. MICHAUD
United States Senator	Member of Congress	Member of Congress

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