



Long Island Commercial Fishing Association

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Sustainable Fisheries *and* Fishermen for the 21st Century

Written Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives,

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

Hearing Entitled “The Cost of Doing Nothing: Why Full Utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund and Investment in our Nation’s Waterways Matter.”

April 10, 2018

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, my name is Bonnie Brady. I am here again today representing the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association as its executive director. Our membership represents commercial fishermen from 11 different gear groups at 14 ports throughout Long Island. It is an honor to be called back again to speak to your subcommittee about what I hope will finally be the full utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.

For those of you on the subcommittee that may remember my face, I first spoke to you back in 2011 as a guest of my then Congressman Timothy Bishop, who represented the First District of the State of New York, when HR 104, the Realize America’s Maritime Promise act otherwise known as the RAMP act, was on the Congressional front burner. I would like to thank all of you, and your staff, for the opportunity to present my comments to you today.

Commercial fishing on Long Island is responsible for 99 percent of New York’s landed seafood catch. In 2017, that translated to over 24 million pounds of seafood worth just under \$48 million dollars at the dock. That year-round commercial fishing income powers the economic engines of hundreds of Long Island businesses, approximately over \$200 million dollars when adding the industry-standard economic multiplier.

Montauk, our state’s largest port, and within the First District, was the 55th largest commercial fishing port in the nation in 2017 based on poundage. We landed 10.1 million pounds of seafood, worth \$14.8 million dollars at the dock, to the boats themselves, what is termed ex-vessel value. As a way to describe that in relation to the Montauk itself, a town of 3100 people, that’s equal to 322 pounds of fish caught for every man, woman and child.

Montauk brings in millions of year-round dollars, which then make their way to our local mom and pop shops, whether it is via the captain and/or crew of a fishing boat, the ice supplier, welder or gear shop, seafood market, grocery store, or restaurant, these people and their small businesses are the very fabric which makes up all of our coastal fishing port communities of Long Island. Our coastal waterways and ports are our version of your Metro and Beltway here in DC, and without properly maintained dredging, hundreds of local businesses and families could be negatively impacted yearly on Long Island.

We have had a series of maintenance dredges, Montauk in 2008, 2012, and 2018, Shinnecock in 2004, 2010, and 2017, and Moriches in 2013. Plus emergency dredges took place in Moriches this past year, and in Montauk in 2011 and Shinnecock in 2014. But that doesn't really paint the true picture of the needs of our fishing ports; the need for consistent, methodical maintenance dredging that the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund was, I believe, set up to do.

Time and time again, the maintenance dredging that we have received, though greatly appreciated, did not do the job necessary because it was not on consistent three-year-cycles.

While I don't have a crystal ball into the future to see what Nor-Easters Mother Nature is ready to serve us, I do know the consequences of not being able to get in or out of port as a commercial fisherman on Long Island due to a shoaled in port.

As a commercial fisherman, you lose income when your inlet isn't dredged deep enough. Say you have a boat that draws, for example, 12 feet (meaning its depth under the water line) but the inlet, because of shoaling, is only ten feet deep. What that means is your boat must wait to leave on higher tide or you risk running aground, which equals more lost income via a trip to the shipyard.

As a commercial fisherman, you lose income because having to leave on a high tide because of shoaling of your port means sometimes you lose a day getting to your fishing grounds, because if you can't get out of the inlet on time, on fishing time, to steam to where you know the fishing has been red-hot of late, by the time you do leave, you get to the grounds late and the fish are on the move again.

As a commercial fisherman, you lose income when you can't land your catch, because you cannot get into your inlet until the tide is high again to pack your fish to send into New York City. If you miss the truck and the market doesn't take place the following day, or until after the weekend, you could risk spoil of part, or possibly your whole catch.

And while I am very grateful that as far as Long Island goes, we have not lost any fishermen due to a boat going aground in shoaling waters in our ports that I can recall in recent memory, we have in the past come far too close. All of these issues are unacceptable sequelae due to inadequate maintenance dredging, which the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund was set up to protect against.

Having to wait six or seven years for maintenance dredging, or scramble for emergency dredging funding is just not the way to support the people and ports that harvest and feed this

nation and beyond. And it does nothing to guarantee our safety and the safety of the thousands of commercial fishermen that do this job day in and day out throughout the US.

Thank you all sincerely for holding this hearing today focusing on fully utilizing the Fund as it was intended. Doing nothing, in my opinion, at best creates a panacea of economic losses for commercial fishermen and their port towns, and at its very worst, it could cost commercial fishermen their lives.

Thank you for allowing me to express these views today, and I look forward to any questions from you or any other members of the subcommittee.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Brady
Executive Director
Long Island Commercial Fishing Association