



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman Supports Federal Legislation That Would Protect Local Fishermen

Gov. Whitman announced today her support of U. S. Congressman Jim Saxton's (R-3rd) bill that would limit the size of commercial fishing vessels that harvest mackerel, herring and other species of fish along the Eastern U.S. coastline.

"Congressman Saxton's bill would halt the return of big factory trawlers that could harvest millions of pounds of fish that spawn along the New Jersey shoreline and other eastern coastal states," Gov. Whitman said. "By not allowing the larger vessels to harvest, we avert the danger of depleting our fish reserves that are harvested by New Jersey's commercial and recreational fishermen."

Congressman Saxton's legislation was introduced to Congress on June 6, after a Maine-based American Pelagic Trading Co. obtained a harvesting permit for the Atlantic Star -- a 370-foot ship that has the capability of harvesting up to 50,000 metric tons of fish -- from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The entire U.S. fleet currently catches 8,000 to 20,000 metric tons of fish per year.

The Council is a Federal regulatory agency that sets guidelines for fishermen who harvest in excess of three miles from a given shoreline. Individual states are responsible for regulations governing vessels that harvest within the three mile limit.

Congressman Saxton's legislation limits the size of vessels that fish for mackerel and herring to 165 feet in length and 3,000 horsepower. New Jersey is currently drafting regulations that would impose the same limits on vessels that fish within the three-mile limit.

Senator Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) has proposed similar legislation in the U.S. Senate.

