

**NEW JERSEY SHELLFISHERIES COUNCIL
— ATLANTIC COAST SECTION —
P.O. BOX 418
PORT REPUBLIC, NJ 08241**

**WALTER L. JOHNSON III, CHAIRMAN
GEORGE W. MATHIS JR., VICE CHAIRMAN
PAUL T. FELDER, COUNCILMAN**

September 23, 2024

Senator Brian P. Stack
411 Palisade Ave.
Jersey City, NJ 07307

Dear Senator Stack,

The New Jersey Shellfisheries Council (Council) is comprised of active members of the New Jersey shellfishing industry and as authorized under Title 50, serves as an advisory body to the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) as well as assisting in the formulating of comprehensive policies for the preservation and improvement of the shellfish industry and resources of the State. The NJ Shellfisheries Council also has exclusive authority to lease lands under tidal waters for shellfish aquaculture. The Council plays a vital role as a conduit between the industry and the NJDEP and has done so for over 120 years. The Atlantic Coast Section of the NJ Shellfisheries Council is typically comprised of one industry member from each coastal county to which the shellfish industry operates. It should be noted that New Jersey's marine fish and shellfish industries are worth approximately \$2.8 billion to the State's economy and is one of the top states in terms of landings.

Given this economic value, it is very frustrating that we continue to have two seats remaining vacant for Atlantic and Monmouth counties with nominees waiting for the Senate Judiciary Committee for confirmation. These nominees, Edward Gaine (Atlantic County) and Kevin Kirk (Monmouth County) have been sponsored by their respective district Senators and put forward to the Judiciary Committee by the Governor's Appointment's Office in early April. The Atlantic County seat has been vacant since 2023 and the Monmouth County seat since 2019.

Both these seats are crucial. Atlantic County is the center point of a shellfish aquaculture industry that is quickly evolving and growing. The Monmouth County seat represents the state's most robust wild hard clam fishery, which accounts for roughly 50% of the State's hard clam landings annually. Having full representation is badly needed and would allow the Council to provide the NJDEP and the Bureau of Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries, with critical information and advice to maintain and grow the shellfish industry. More importantly, growth in the shellfish industry, especially shellfish aquaculture, could potentially create hundreds of jobs and support small business in these coastal regions.

The Council requests that these two individuals be placed on the next senate Judiciary Committee agenda for confirmation. The viability of New Jersey's shellfish industry can be directly attributed to the working relationship between the industry and state resource managers, in which proper representation plays a key role.

Thank you very much for your attention in this matter. If you would like to discuss this matter, please feel free to contact me at (609) 513-4380.

Sincerely,



Walter L. Johnson III
Chairman

c. Senate President, Nicholas P. Scutari

Senator Anthony M. Bucco

Senator Michael L. Testa Jr.

Senator Vincent J. Polistina

Senator Declan J. O'Scanlon Jr.

Senator Vin Gopal

Sam Parker, Appointments Director

Shawn LaTourette, Commissioner, NJDEP

Edward D. Wengryn, Secretary, NJDA

Dave Golden, Assistant Commissioner, NJ DEP Fish and Wildlife

Joseph Cimino, Administrator, NJ Marine Resources Administration

Dick Herb, Acting Chair, NJ Marine Fisheries Council

Members, Delaware Bay Section of the NJ Shellfisheries Council