



October 13, 2015

Northeast Regional Planning Body  
Ecosystem-Based Management Working Group

Submitted via email to the Northeast Regional Planning Body Executive Secretary

Dear Working Group Members:

It has come to my attention that there may have been a misunderstanding related to Conservation Law Foundation's recommendations to the Northeast Regional Planning Body's Ecosystem-Based Management Working Group, sent in our letter dated September 30, 2015. In that letter, Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) strongly encouraged the Working Group to focus its attention on "supporting the research, identification, evaluation and application of approaches and methods to define and characterize important ecological areas for inclusion in the Northeast Regional Ocean Plan." There was apparently a misunderstanding regarding our recommendations on the inclusion of benthic and pelagic habitat information into the identification of important ecological areas. In our letter, CLF recommended that:

*To the extent that enough research has been completed to produce useful benthic and pelagic habitat maps, we encourage the Working Group to review and provide feedback on the development of these maps and corresponding data, along with guidance on incorporating this information into the IEA analysis. Otherwise, we recommend that this task be sequenced after the above three tasks are completed.*

To be clear, CLF fully supports and recommends incorporating benthic and pelagic habitat information in to the methodology for identifying important ecological area to the extent that this information is available and in a form that can be incorporated into the analysis. Our intent in the original letter was to signal that if this information was not available, that lack of information should not hinder the work of the RPB to identify important ecological areas with the best scientific information available. In subsequent conversations with scientists, it is apparent that such information is available and can be incorporated into the analysis. We strongly support the inclusions of these critical factors in the analysis and identification of important ecological areas.

Thank you all for devoting your time and considerable expertise to the RPB and the development of the nation's first ecosystem-based regional marine spatial plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Priscilla M. Brooks".

Priscilla M. Brooks  
VP and Director of Ocean Conservation