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Chief Richard Getchell
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RE: Comments on the Draft Northeast Regional Ocean Plan

Dear Regional Planning Body Co-leads:

As the immediate past President of the National Boating Federation, a member of the National Safe Boating Council, and a recreational boater for the last 65 years, I see firsthand how busy our ocean is getting, and I understand the need for better coordination of our ocean spaces. For recreational boaters, it is not just about protecting our access to the water but also ensuring our safety. By having a clearer understanding of where other uses are operating, we can better identify potential hazards and be proactive about our safety on the water. I fully support this planning process, applaud the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB) on its work of this draft plan, and appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback.

The National Boating Federation (NBF) represents the recreational boating interests of more than 2,000,000 private citizens. Our membership spans the nation - from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts. Our goal is to promote safe boating through community outreach and to look out for the interests of our members by keeping them advised of legislative and regulatory proposed changes to ensure that boaters have the opportunity to speak on these issues and better enjoy the marine environment, while abiding by agreed upon best practices.

NBF's members participate in sport fishing, wildlife viewing, sailing, and powerboating, among many others, each of which contributes to a number of local and national economic markets. In a study conducted in 2012 by SeaPlan as part of the Northeast ocean planning process, it was estimated that recreational boating on the ocean over the course of just one year contributed nearly \$3.5 billion and the equivalent of 27,000 year-round jobs to the Northeastern economy.

Given the size of our membership base and the value of the industry, I applaud the RPB for the inclusion of recreational boating activities into the draft Northeast Ocean Plan. I am excited to see steps taken to spatially characterize the recreational boating activity in New England with work products like the Northeast Recreational Boating Survey. Having recreational boaters represented on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and the potential impacts on our recreational use considered when potential development proposals occur is highly valuable. My biggest concern, however, continues to be those recreational boaters not selected for surveys continue to be absent from these data sets. If you want a true representation of all boating uses, I urge the RPB to reach out to and engage the well-established and very

active recreational boating communities – these include United States Power Squadrons, Coast Guard Auxiliary units , Massachusetts Bay Yacht Club Association, and Maine Coastal Canoe Guides, just to name a few. The point I want to emphasize is that all boaters need a voice – not just those who may or may not have ever been on the water in a private vessel. *I ask the RPB to hold firm on its pledge to engage all stakeholders in this work moving forward and would ask for specific commitments on how it plans to involve the recreational boating community to be laid out in the final version on the Northeast Ocean Plan.*

The data gaps identified as part of the science and research priorities in Chapter Five of the ocean plan are a first step to filling the important data gaps that exist on recreational boating identified above. I urge the RPB to prioritize research to fill this gap. Advancing and maintaining data associated with the data portal is key to the future of the Northeast Ocean Plan. *I ask the RPB to make the necessary funding commitments to ensure research is advanced and the data portal is fully funded.*

Again, thank you for the work done to date on the Northeast Ocean Plan. I look forward to working with you on improving the recreational boating data for future iterations of the plan. Please contact me with additional questions or assistance with outreach to boaters.

Sincerely,

Carolyn V. Belmore

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