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LEGISLATION TO RESTORE MONOMOY REFUGE BOUNDARY CLEARS FIRST LEGISLATIVE HURDLE

December 13, 2017—Today the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources approved legislation, introduced by Congressman Keating (H.R. 1157), that would restore the historically recognized western boundary of the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The bill must now be approved by the full House of Representatives before being sent to the Senate for consideration.

“Today was a great day for our hard working men and women who make a living harvesting shellfish and finfish in the waters west of Monomoy”, said Selectman Shareen Davis who serves on the Monomoy Subcommittee for the Board of Selectman. *“We want to thank Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) for his support and assistance”.*

The bill is necessary because the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) chose to arbitrarily redefine the western boundary of the Refuge in March 2016 through administrative action resulting in the illegal taking of over 3,000 acres of submerged land and open water from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Enactment of the legislation, supported by substantial legal analysis by the Town and Commonwealth, will eliminate the necessity to sue the federal government over the illegal taking by FWS.

“Since 1944 all parties, including the FWS, recognized the western boundary of the Refuge as the mean low water line. Since that time the Commonwealth and Town have exclusively and effectively managed the open waters and submerged lands west of Monomoy Island to the benefit of the environment, public, and Refuge”, said Selectman Jeffrey Dykens also a member of the Subcommittee. *“All the legislation does is restore the status quo that was recognized for more than 70 years.”*

“We want to especially thank Governor Charlie Baker and his Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Matthew Beaton who worked to ensure bipartisan support for the bill. We are also indebted to Congressman Keating for introducing the legislation”, said Town Manager Jill Goldsmith. State Representative Sarah Peake showed her strong support by visiting Washington with Town officials in support of the bill. *“We look forward to working with Senators Markey and Warren to ensure the Senate approves the bill so it can be sent to President Trump for signature”,* said Manager Goldsmith

This past July, over a 2 week period, more than 1,000 individuals from across the nation expressed their support for the legislation to Governor Baker, encouraging his support. *“This incredible demonstration of support indicates the importance of this issue, not only to our community but to the broader Massachusetts fishing community”* said Manager Goldsmith. Chatham’s legislative effort is supported by virtually every town on the Cape and Islands as well as the Mayors of the fishing communities of New Bedford and Gloucester, and the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce.

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