From: Bob Mahood
To: ALL SAFMC; Ben Hartig; Brian Cheuvront (Brian.Cheuvront@ncdenr.gov); Brian Sullivan; Charlie Phillips; David Cupka ; Duane Harris; George Geiger (georgejgeiger@bellsouth.net); John O"Shea; Louis.Daniel@ncmail.net; Mac Currin (mcurrin1@bellsouth.net); Mark Robson; Rita Merritt (MIRIDON@ec.rr.com); Robert Boyles (boylesr@dnr.sc.gov); Roy Crabtree; Susan Shipman; Tom Swatzel; Wilson_Laney@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Just In: NOAA Issues Draft Catch Share Policy For Public Comment
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2009 1:16:34 PM

FYI

From: Dr. Jane Lubchenco [mailto:Announcement@noaa.gov]
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2009 11:38 AM
Subject: Just In: NOAA Issues Draft Catch Share Policy For Public Comment

Message From the Under Secretary

December 10, 2009

I'm pleased to announce that NOAA has released a draft national policy today that encourages the use of catch shares as a scientifically proven method to help ensure the sustainability of our oceans and put struggling fisheries on the path to profitability.

Rebuilding our fisheries and restoring ocean health to help keep our coastal communities vibrant are top priorities for NOAA. Although we have made solid progress in rebuilding many fisheries, as mandated under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, more than 20 percent of our fish stocks remain depleted. Fishermen are working harder to bring back fewer fish.

Catch Shares: A Well-Tested Tool for Effective Fisheries Management

Under a catch share system, fishermen and other fishing entities are allocated individual shares of the fishery's scientifically determined total catch, which can be fished, leased or sold.

Catch share programs are already in place in 13 of the nation's commercial fisheries. Historically, catch shares have only been applied to the commercial fishing sector. Regional fishery management councils have the authority to consider the appropriateness of catch share programs and decide which sectors, if any, may benefit from their use. NOAA is committed to working with the councils and recreational, commercial and other stakeholder groups to help assess whether a catch share program is right for them.

With a greater stake in the fishery, fishermen receiving catch shares are more invested in its health and sustainability. As the fishery recovers and becomes more profitable, catch shares increase in value. Fishermen are free to manage their shares as they wish, which could mean choosing to fish when the weather is good and the market price is optimal. Catch shares helped eliminate the "race to fish" in a number of fisheries, reducing not only overfishing, but also bycatch of undersized fish and other species caught accidentally.

When properly tailored to the needs of individual fisheries, catch shares can help sustain the livelihoods of fishermen and the vibrancy of fishing communities, including the preservation of wharfs and diverse fishing fleets.

The Success of a National Policy Depends on Local Involvement

It's important to note that the draft policy NOAA is issuing today is not a mandate, nor does it set numerical targets. The development of catch share programs is voluntary and, to be successful, should be designed with extensive stakeholder participation to meet the local goals specific to each fishery and sector.

The draft policy is now available for public comment. Before issuing a final version, NOAA will review and consider all input, which can be submitted until April 10, 2010.

The proposed policy is the result of months of careful consideration and input from a task force of NOAA experts and members from the eight regional fishery management councils. NOAA also held listening sessions with commercial and recreational fishing communities, and environmental nongovernmental

organizations.

It takes the hard work and dedication of many to develop a policy that takes into account both the needs of nature and those of the nation's fishermen and their communities. I want to thank Monica Medina, the chair of the Catch Shares Task Force, and Mark Holliday, its executive director, for leading the effort to work collaboratively with a variety of stakeholders to construct this important guidance.

Tell us what you think: You can read and comment on NOAA's proposed catch share policy by visiting www.nmfs.noaa.gov/catchshares.

Sincerely,

Jane Lubchenco signature

Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

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