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New Guidance for Fishing Communities

Fishing has a long and rich history of contributing to the culture and well-being of our country, and fishing communities have become iconic elements of our coastal landscape. In 2011, NOAA held a workshop on commercial fishing communities and catch shares to explore how to help sustain local fishing communities under changing management conditions. A need was expressed for additional guidance on ways for fishermen to organize to sustain their local fishing communities.

To meet the need for accessible information about strategies fishermen and fishing communities can and are using to adapt to new management conditions, NOAA Fisheries has developed non-prescriptive guidance that lays out a general framework for instituting *Fishing Community and Regional Fishery Association* entities under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

This new [NOAA Fisheries Technical Memorandum](#) aims to increase the accessibility of these entities to residents who conduct commercial or recreational fishing, processing, or fishery-dependent support businesses within a Council's management area. The goal is to make it easier for Councils and stakeholders alike to assess the appropriateness of these organizational entities during the design and development of new or modification of existing limited access privilege programs.

About the workshop

The workshop participants included members and staff of the Regional Fishery Management Councils, NMFS staff, NOAA General Counsel, fishermen, and community and fishery-based association experts with experience in organizing and managing fishermen. During the workshop, the participants discussed nine core topics covering a range of social, economic, technical, and environmental issues. These discussions led to a set of themes and several requests for further guidance from NOAA. The outcomes of the workshop do not capture every perspective across or within fishing communities and do not represent official positions or represent a consensus. They do provide a valuable starting point for thinking about ways to support communities as they adjust to current and future catch share programs to ensure sustainable fisheries.

Major Topics Discussed

The following nine topics were addressed during breakout sessions:

1. MSA: Communities in Fisheries Management.
2. MSA 303A Limited Access Privilege Programs & Communities.
3. Non-303A Community Pathways for Councils- CFAs, Sectors.
4. Sustainability and Regional Fishery Association plans.
5. Monitoring and Evaluating Community Objectives/Outcomes.
6. Communities Getting and Holding Quota: (Initial Allocation, Transferability, Accumulation Limits, Permit Banks, Fisheries Loan Fund, Catch Accounting).
7. Facilitating Community Organization Efforts.

Workshop Case Studies

In addition to the nine topics, representatives from several fishing communities provided brief overviews of their fishing history and their experiences under catch share management. Three of these case studies are highlighted here:

i. Building Capacity through Stability – The Port Clyde Community Groundfish Sector

In 2010, the Northeast Fisheries Management Council approved Amendment 16 to the Northeast multispecies fishery management plan (which includes cod) in an effort to prevent further decline.

The Amendment created an alternative to days-at-sea, allowing groups of fishermen to participate in a catch share program by forming "sectors" that received quota based on catch history.

ii. Cape Cod Fisheries Trust

The Cape Cod Fisheries Trust, a collaboration between the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association and the Community Development Partnership, leases subsidized groundfish and scallop quota to qualified members of Cape Cod's small-boat fishing fleet. Like other quota banks, the Trust is designed to retain quota in the community and counteract fleet consolidation incentives brought about by catch share programs.

iii. Using Technology to Improve the Durability of a Fishery: Central Coast Fishery Project

The Central Coast Trawl fishery has been in decline for 30 years. In an effort to curb the downward trajectory of the fishery and improve its social, economic, and environmental status, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council established the Pacific Groundfish Trawl Rationalization program in January 2011. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has played an important role in restructuring the fishery. Unlike many other non-profit entities that work on fisheries-related issues, TNC owns several federal groundfish permits and is leasing them to fishermen. Uniquely positioned, it is leveraging its

- 8. Current FMP Goals and Objectives Affecting Communities; Threats and Opportunities; Future Vision Relative to Communities.
- 9. Transferring Knowledge – Future Communication and Engagement Strategies with Communities.

position to transform the trawl fishery into a sustainable, low-volume, high-value fishery.

Download the Workshop Proceedings

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