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NOAA Announces Catch Share Task Force Members

NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco today appointed members to a new Catch Share Task Force, which will assist NOAA and the regional fishery management councils as they consider and implement catch-share management programs. This initiative furthers NOAA's commitment to the long-term prosperity of America's commercial and recreational fishermen, and to ensuring healthy, productive and resilient oceans.

Monica Medina, senior advisor to the NOAA administrator, will lead the task force.

"Transitioning to catch shares is a priority for NOAA," said Medina. "This task force will engage stakeholders to help ensure that the regional fishery councils and NOAA implement catch shares wherever appropriate. We must all work together to end overfishing and rebuild fisheries, to improve the economics of fishing and fishing communities, and to protect the ecosystems that sustain them."

Other members include:

John Pappalardo, chairman, New England Fishery Management Council
Dr. Lee Anderson, vice chairman, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Eric Olson, chairman, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
George Geiger, member, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Robert Gill, member, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Dr. David Hanson, member, Pacific Fishery Management Council
Sean Martin, chairman, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
Dr. Jim Balsiger, acting NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service
Dr. Steve Murawski, director of scientific programs and chief science advisor, NOAA's Fisheries Service
John Oliver, deputy assistant administrator for operations, NOAA's Fisheries Service
Alan Risenhoover, director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA's Fisheries Service
Pat Kurkul, northeast regional administrator, NOAA's Fisheries Service
Dr. Roy Crabtree, southeast regional administrator, NOAA's Fisheries Service
Dr. Sam Pooley, director, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, NOAA's Fisheries Service

Dr. Mark Holliday, director of policy for NOAA's Fisheries Service, will serve as the executive director. Justin Kenney, NOAA director of communications and external affairs, and John Gray, NOAA director of legislative affairs, are ex-officio members of the task force.

The task force includes a geographically diverse mix of people with specific expertise in catch share programs, science and fisheries management. The task force has five objectives:

1. To develop a new NOAA policy on catch shares that ensures that catch shares are fully considered when councils take up fishery management plan amendments.

2. To make sure that councils that want to move forward with catch shares have the technical and administrative support to move quickly to design a catch share systems while empowering local fishermen to be part of the process.
3. To make sure that catch share designs achieve the best possible environmental and economic performance by supporting healthy ecosystems, reducing bycatch and habitat damage, and helping to meet annual catch limits.
4. To consider whether any organizational changes are needed within NOAA to provide the best possible communication and support.
5. To provide advice to the under secretary on how to allocate resources to the councils to support this work, and how to create milestones so that progress can be evaluated.

The task force will identify the impediments to the full consideration or implementation of catch shares. In continuing discussions with the councils over the next two months, the task force will work to resolve any funding, policy, legal, and infrastructure issues that are hindering progress.

Discussion of these issues will identify any needed changes in NOAA and council capacity, and help specify the requirements to support the design and implementation of effective catch share programs including where investments in research, monitoring, policy, decision analysis and/or new technology are needed. Based on input from members of the task force, Medina will submit findings and recommendations to Dr. Lubchenco by Aug. 1.

In fisheries managed with catch shares, individuals or groups of fishermen are allotted a share of the total allowable catch of a fish stock. These fishermen then decide how to catch their allotment when weather, markets and individual business conditions are most favorable, and they must ensure that they do not exceed their catch limits. The allocation of shares of the sustainable catch eliminates the biologically and economically wasteful race to capture a share of the total before the fishery-wide limit is reached. In this way, fishermen gain an incentive to conserve fish stocks, avoid market gluts, and catch their allocated share of the total at the least cost.

Catch shares that are well-designed and thoughtfully prepared are the best way for many fisheries to have healthy, profitable fisheries that are sustainable. Because of these scientific results, moving forward to implement more catch share programs is a high priority for NOAA.

“We are committed to working with all the regional councils to find ways to make the health of the oceans go hand-in-hand with the prosperity of fishermen and the well-being of coastal communities.” said Dr. Balsiger, acting assistant administrator of NOAA’s Fisheries Service and a member of the task force.

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