



APRIL 22, 2010

**Statement from Eric Schwaab, NOAA Assistant Administrator for NOAA's Fisheries –
Catch Share Programs**

We appreciate continuing the dialogue on catch shares afforded by today's hearing before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife. As I testified at an earlier hearing before this subcommittee, catch share programs can play an essential role in meeting our national goal of rebuilding and sustaining our fishery resources to ensure that Americans have opportunities to fish sustainably for generations to come.

NOAA encourages the careful consideration of catch shares, but does not mandate that catch shares be used in any specific fishery or sector. Catch shares are one tool among several for effectively managing fisheries. The key to developing any successful fishery management program is active involvement from fishermen and other stakeholders in the regional fishery management council where the programs are designed.

We are encouraging the regional fishery management councils to carefully design catch share programs to avoid or mitigate any negative aspects of catch shares using the tools available in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. With the development of any new catch share program, there is a great deal of design flexibility to allow fisheries to support diverse fleets of both small and large vessels, encourage owner-operated fleets, set aside shares for specific sectors such as recreational participants and traditional fishing communities, and provide opportunities for new entrants to the fisheries. We are working with the recreational fishing community to ensure that catch share programs are designed to help address their concerns.

Thoughtful catch share design can promote sustainable fishing communities, including good jobs, preservation of wharfs, processing facilities, fuel and ice suppliers and other coastal businesses essential to a working waterfront. There are several recently added provisions in the Magnuson-Stevens Act to help sustain fishing communities and small owner-operator fleets via catch shares. These provisions include special allocations to fishing communities and regional fishing associations, and loan programs for small vessel- and entry level-fishermen.

Eric C. Schwaab
NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

For media inquiries, contact Connie Barclay or Monica Allen, NOAA Fisheries Communications, 301-713-2370.