

CATCH SHARES

A Fisheries Management Tool

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Rebuilding our fisheries is essential to preserving the livelihoods of fishermen, the vibrancy of our coastal communities, a sustainable supply of healthy seafood, and restoring ocean ecosystems to a healthy state. Catch share programs give fishermen a stake in the benefits of a well-managed fishery and, therefore, greater incentive to ensure effective management.

– *Dr. Jane Lubchenco*
NOAA Administrator

Catch share programs set a biologically based annual catch limit for each fish stock and allocate a specific portion of that catch limit to entities, such as fishermen, cooperatives, or communities.

Knowing their share is secure, fishermen can be more selective about when and how they catch their allotment. They can plan their fishing schedules in response to weather, market, and individual business conditions.

When designed correctly, catch share programs help eliminate the race to fish, reduce overcapacity and bycatch, and improve economic efficiency. They also help ensure fishermen adhere to annual catch limits because the value of their share is directly linked to the overall health of the fish stock and its habitat.



The Facts

The Race to Fish — What is commonly referred to as the ‘race to fish’ results from management systems that simply set a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for a fishery so that all fishermen are fishing against a single quota.

Fishermen then race each other to catch as many fish as they can before the overall TAC is reached. This leads to too much equipment, unsafe fishing practices, high levels of bycatch, periodic floods of the market with fish, and more fish being sold frozen than fresh.

Increasing Share Value — The value of the fisherman’s share is directly proportional to the overall health of the fish stock. A catch share fisherman has incentives to support conservation of the resource to maintain or increase the value of his or her share in future years.

Sustainable catch shares fisheries are a win-win situation for the fish, the ecosystem and fishermen.



Recreational Fishing — Current catch share programs focus on commercial fishing groups.

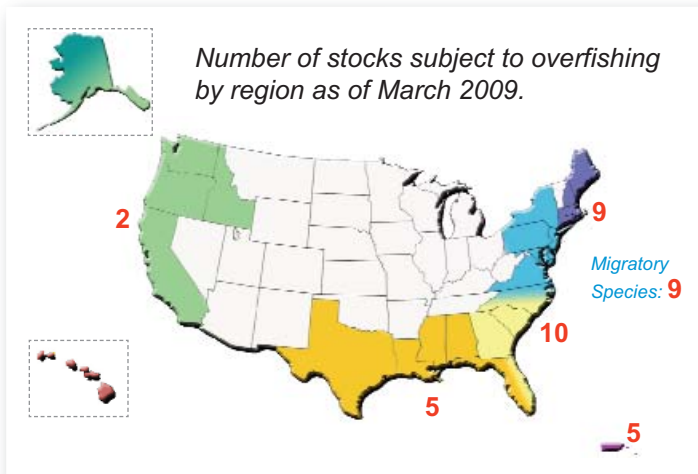
However, there has been recent interest in exploring their use for managing recreational fishing, which would involve assigning catch share privileges to individual anglers or sectors. All fishermen benefit from the increasing fish stock and reduction in time and effort restrictions.



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The Science

There is increasing scientific evidence that catch shares are an effective method of fisheries management that produce better results than many current management systems.



State of the Fisheries — Under current management, 23% of U.S. fish stocks are overfished, meaning those stocks are depleted. In the Northeast specifically, more than 75% of groundfish stocks are overfished (NEFSC, 2008). Sixteen percent of all U.S. stocks are being fished too aggressively to be able to produce their maximum sustainable yield (Status of U.S. Fisheries, 2008).

Comparison — In a comparison of 11,135 global fisheries, implementing catch shares was found to reverse the trend toward fisheries collapse more effectively than efforts in non-catch share fisheries (Costello et al., 2008).

Design — Well-designed catch share programs will reduce overfishing, decrease bycatch and promote environmental stewardship among fisherman. Elements of the program design include setting a sustainable annual catch limit, determining how shares are distributed, and establishing effective monitoring and enforcement systems.

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service and Catch Shares

- ▶ There are 12 catch share fisheries in the United States NOAA is committed to considering and implementing catch shares programs where appropriate, and is currently working to increase the number of catch share programs in the country to 16 by 2011.
- ▶ In June 2009, Under Secretary Dr. Jane Lubchenco formed a Catch Share Task Force to provide information to NOAA as it develops a strategy to encourage the consideration and implementation of catch share programs in U.S. fisheries where appropriate.
- ▶ NOAA has requested \$7 million for Limited Access Privilege Programs, a type of catch share and \$18.6 million to help transition the New England groundfish fishery to a sector-based catch share system.

To learn more about Catch Shares, visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/domes_fish/catchshare/index.htm.

To learn more about NOAA, visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

Current Catch Share Programs

Surf Clam/Ocean Quahog
Wreckfish
Halibut & Sablefish
Western Alaska Community Development Quota
Bering Sea AFA Pollock Cooperatives
Pacific Sablefish Permit Stacking
Georges Bank Cod Hook Gear Sector
Georges Bank Cod Fixed Gear Sector
Bering Sea King & Tanner Crab
Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota
Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Pilot
Bering Sea Groundfish (Non-Pollock) Cooperatives

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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