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Announcing the new Chief Science Advisor for NOAA Fisheries
Message from NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, Eric Schwaab

Today, I am pleased to announce Richard Merrick, Ph.D., as the new Chief Science Advisor for NOAA Fisheries. Dr. Merrick will lead our efforts to provide the science needed to support sustainable fisheries and ecosystems and to continue our country's progress in ending overfishing, rebuilding fish populations, saving critical species, preserving vital habitats and creating jobs for American citizens. As we turn the corner on ending overfishing and rebuilding fish stocks, Dr. Merrick will assume a prominent role in NOAA's efforts to improve the stock assessment process, by integrating new technologies into our science efforts, evaluating and responding to ecosystem challenges and expanding ongoing efforts to build and enhance science partnerships.

As the head of NOAA Fisheries' scientific operations, Dr. Merrick will lead NOAA's six regional Fisheries Science Centers, including 30 NOAA Fisheries laboratories and approximately 1,400 staff nationwide. With 26 years of experience with NOAA Fisheries, Dr. Merrick brings to his new position a critical understanding of NOAA Fisheries' scientific resources. An innovative scientist throughout his career, Dr. Merrick's creativity and focus on science solutions will help in this time of growing scientific demands and tighter budgets. Now more than ever, his experience over the last two decades working effectively and productively with partners within and outside of government will prove valuable.

Dr. Merrick, who will begin in his new position on September 12, took his first position as a fishery observer with NOAA Fisheries in 1985 at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. Over the next 12 years, Dr. Merrick organized and carried out field research on Steller sea lions and developed novel scientific approaches to monitoring and studying this endangered species. In 1997, Dr. Merrick joined the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to direct research on whales, porpoises, seals and turtles, most recently leading the Division that oversees the region's fish and marine mammal stock assessments, as well as the Northeast Center's economic and social science research. Recently, he co-chaired an interagency team studying climate adaptation strategies for the marine environment; their final report is forthcoming.

Dr. Merrick's extensive and wide-ranging education includes a Ph.D. in fisheries from the University of Washington; a master's of science degree in biological oceanography as well as a master's degree in marine resource management from Oregon State University; and a master's degree in city and regional planning and a bachelor of science degree from Clemson University.

As I welcome Dr. Merrick to his new position, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my great appreciation to three of NOAA Fisheries' top scientists, Dr. Doug DeMaster, Dr. Sam Pooley, and Dr. Ned Cyr, who have all served tirelessly as acting Chief Science Advisors since our previous Chief Science Advisor, Dr. Steve Murawski, retired on December 31, 2010.