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NATION'S MARINE FISHERIES MANAGERS HONOR NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE DIRECTOR HOGARTH FOR LEADERSHIP

The nation's marine fisheries management council leaders gave their outstanding leadership award to the top federal manager, NOAA's Fisheries Service director Bill Hogarth, at the group's second annual national fisheries conference held in Washington, D.C. last week. NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Representatives from the eight regional fisheries management councils presented Hogarth the award during its "Managing Our Nation's Fisheries" conference that was designed to exchange ideas and improve the management of marine fisheries in the United States. Hundreds of the nation's foremost fisheries experts gathered to address some of the challenges associated with marine resource conservation.

"The management councils felt Bill deserved this award for his outstanding leadership and service to the nation's fisheries," said Dan Furlong, Executive Director for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. "We appreciate how he fosters new and enhanced cooperation between the NOAA Fisheries Service and our councils as we jointly act as stewards of our living marine resources."

"This award is well deserved. Bill's influence has been key in getting more fishery assessments and socio-economic studies completed and he has led the shift in fisheries management towards an ecosystem-based approach," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

Hogarth was appointed NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries in 2001. He oversees the management and conservation of marine fisheries and the protection of marine mammals, sea turtles, and coastal fisheries habitat within the United States exclusive economic zone.

"Bill has been a champion of the council system," Furlong said. "He practices what he preaches regarding a partnership approach with NOAA Fisheries, and he has always acts in good faith."

During the three-day conference, participants laid a foundation for how the United States can implement the Bush Administration's Ocean Action Plan, released Dec. 17, 2004. Panel topics included: NOAA's movement toward ecosystem-based management of our oceans, expanding the use of market-based quota programs, strengthening marine science and management and developing marine managed areas. Fish stock rebuilding and fisheries governance were also discussed.

NOAA Administrator Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., gave the conference keynote presentation where he talked about the importance of ecosystem-based management and observations, and how they relate to fisheries management. He emphasized the importance of partnerships to advance the goals expressed in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan and to improve an already successful fisheries management system, and the importance of the slated reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act.

These topics are priority issues highlighted by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy during its three-year review of current ocean management in the United States. The Bush Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan, an initial response to the Commission's final report, identifies short-term priorities and establishes a vision for long-term advancements in U.S. ocean policy. Conference participants represented policymakers, scientists, fishermen, environmentalists and the general public.

The Administration's budget request to Congress for FY06 includes funding to implement initiatives in the Ocean Action Plan, including \$1 million for the regional fishery management councils to develop individual fishing quota programs, and increased funding for fishery assessments, socio-economic studies and vessel monitoring systems. The president requested an additional \$1.5 million for coral protections.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to providing and preserving the nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management, and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: www.noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Managing Our Nation's Fisheries Conference: www.managingfisheries.org