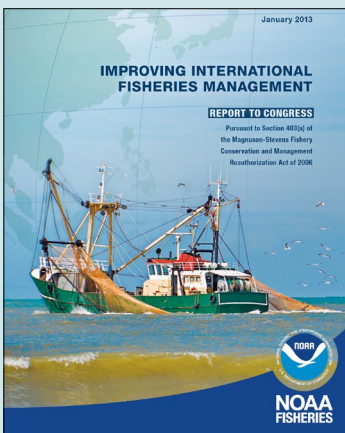


International Fisheries



The Coast Guard Cutter Rush escorts suspected IUU vessel.
Photo Credit: U.S. Coast Guard



2013 Report to Congress on International IUU Fishing

NOAA's Priorities to Combat Global IUU Fishing in 2013

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is committed to promoting the sustainable management of fish stocks and supporting the economic health of U.S. fishing communities. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing threatens both of these objectives. IUU vessels do not abide by the strong and effective conservation and management measures to which U.S. fishermen are subject. IUU operations can devastate local fish stocks and destroy sensitive, productive marine habitats through the use of harmful fishing gear and practices. Fish caught by IUU vessels are not included within scientific stock assessments, and thereby IUU fishing undermines efforts to gather the data necessary to sustainably manage affected fisheries. Furthermore, trade in IUU fishery products results in unfair competition in the marketplace. While progress has been made in ensuring fairness for U.S. fishermen on the water and in the marketplace, continued and diligent effort is needed to comprehensively address the threats posed by IUU fishing.

NOAA's 2012 Achievements to Combat IUU Fishing

In 2012, NOAA made great strides to combat IUU fishing. In early 2013, NOAA submitted a [Congressionally mandated report](#)¹ that identified 10 nations whose fishing vessels engaged in IUU fishing in 2011 or 2012. The United States will consult with each of the 10 nations: Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, Italy, Mexico, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Tanzania, and Venezuela to encourage them to take action to address IUU fishing by their fishermen. If a nation fails to take appropriate action to address the instances of illegal fishing activities described in the report, that nation's fishing vessels may be denied entry into U.S. ports, and imports of certain fish or fish products from that nation into the United States may be prohibited.

The United States also made strides to combat IUU fishing through Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), the primary agents for managing fisheries in international waters. In 2012, the United States worked closely with our international partners to strengthen the ability of the Members of various RFMOs to fight IUU vessels, through the adoption and implementation of management measures. These measures included development and sharing of lists of IUU vessels, enhanced monitoring and control programs, adoption of port State inspection schemes, and better regulation of transshipments at sea.

Working cooperatively with other nations through capacity building efforts is

critical to successful efforts to combat IUU fishing and support sustainable fisheries. In 2012, NOAA collaborated with several developing coastal States to support their domestic fisheries management, including establishing scientific stock



assessments and strong enforcement regimes. For example, over the past 2 years, NOAA has trained West African fisheries management and enforcement officials. In February 2012, U.S. trainers presented a 5-day course in Liberia to observers and inspectors on collecting data from tuna purse seine and longline vessels. NOAA is engaged in similar efforts in Latin and South America and in the Pacific Rim region.

NOAA's Priority Areas to Address IUU Fishing in 2013

Reducing IUU fishing globally helps to level the playing field for U.S. fishermen. In 2013, NOAA will continue to engage in significant efforts to combat the threat of IUU fishing. Working in cooperation with other U.S. federal and non-federal Government agencies, foreign partners, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and private sector entities is crucial to combating IUU fishing effectively. NOAA will undertake its efforts in 2013 in close collaboration with these partners. NOAA will also work with interested constituent groups to keep them engaged in these ongoing efforts. As the current budgetary environment is challenging and can change, the activities described below are dependent on available funding.

Support U.S. Ratification of the Port State Measures Agreement and Passage of Other Important IUU Related Legislation

The Port State Measures Agreement is the first binding global instrument focused specifically on combating IUU fishing. It establishes minimum standards for the conduct of dockside inspections and training of inspectors and, most significantly, requires parties to restrict port entry and port services for vessels known or reasonably suspected of having been involved in IUU fishing. In 2011, the Obama Administration sent the Port State Measures Agreement to the Senate, seeking advice and consent for its ratification. It also prepared draft implementing legislation that was shared with both the House and the Senate; introduced in the Senate as the Pirate Fishing Elimination Act (S. 1980). Ratification by the Senate and Congressional passage of the accompanying implementing legislation will bring the Agreement closer to entry into force globally. Once in force, the Agreement will benefit U.S. fishermen, seafood buyers, and consumers by preventing vessels carrying illegally harvested fish from entering ports around the world and diluting the market with illegal product.



As part of our efforts to encourage ratification of the Agreement by other nations, the United States will continue to seek, as appropriate, amendments to existing port inspection measures of various RFMOs to strengthen those measures and bring them into greater consistency with the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures. In RFMOs where port inspection measures do



not exist, we will seek to put in place measures consistent with the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures. In strengthening existing and adopting new measures, we will be mindful that various issues may need to be resolved before implementation can occur including capacity building for developing states.

In addition, NOAA will support other IUU fishing related legislation in the 113th Congress. The United States has signed new conventions to establish the North Pacific Fisheries Commission and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization and was successful in its efforts to amend the underlying conventions for the Inter-American Tropical Tuna

Commission and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization. Each of these agreements will improve fisheries management and provide tools to combat IUU fishing. NOAA will work with the Department of State, the U.S. Coast Guard, other relevant agencies, and Congress to seek ratification of these agreements and the enactment of necessary implementing legislation.

Development or Improvement of RFMO Compliance Monitoring Schemes

Effective, transparent, and meaningful compliance monitoring schemes are critical to assessing the level of implementation of management measures by RFMO members and ensuring that the requirements of RFMOs are effectively enforced. Accurate information about compliance is important to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation and management measures. Failure by RFMO members to implement and enforce agreed conservation and management measures can significantly undermine the effectiveness of those measures and the ability of RFMOs to carry out their mandates. Identifying and addressing areas where members fail to act - either willfully or as a result of a lack of capacity - is critical if we are to prevent and eliminate IUU fishing.

Most RFMOs have undergone performance review exercises in recent years. These reviews included efforts an evaluation of compliance monitoring mechanisms. Based on RFMO performance reviews, NOAA, in coordination with the Department of State, will examine the effectiveness of these existing mechanisms. Based on that analysis, and as appropriate, NOAA will work with the Department of State and relevant members of RFMOs to promote the development and adoption of measures to improve the functioning of RFMOs. Potential measures may include identification of non-compliant RFMO members, improvements to reporting and transparency schemes, tools to build capacity, where appropriate, and development of appropriate penalties for IUU activities. In RFMOs where no performance review has been undertaken, NOAA will continue to insist that such reviews should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Establishment of Unique Vessel Identifiers (UVIs) for Fishing Vessels

The assignment of globally unique, permanent identification



numbers to fishing vessels would greatly improve the ability to quickly and accurately identify vessels, trace their history, and link them to specific fishing activities. Thus far, international progress to require the use of UVIs on fishing vessels has been slow. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) requires all passenger ships of 100 GT or greater and cargo ships of 300 GT or greater in size to get a unique and permanent number from an independent company, IHS-Fairplay. Fishing vessels, however, are exempt from this requirement under current IMO regulations but can be issued a number if they apply.



The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has identified the implementation of UVIs for fishing vessels as an essential prerequisite to establish a successful Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels, and Supply Vessels. This Record will further strengthen efforts to monitor the activity of vessels involved in or supporting IUU fishing. The FAO has agreed that the first phase of the Global Record will apply to all motorized tuna harvesting vessels that can operate on the high seas, and that the UVI for those vessels will be tied to the IHS-Fairplay system used by the IMO. Those RFMOs that manage tuna and tuna-like species have also begun deliberations on how to establish UVIs for their fishing vessels and have committed to continue that effort in concert with the development of their consolidated list of authorized fishing vessels

In 2013, NOAA, in collaboration with the Department of State, the U.S. Coast Guard, and relevant stakeholders, will review the international state of play on the mandatory use of UVIs, in particular actions taken at the IMO, FAO, and tuna RFMOs. NOAA will also develop approaches to advance the use of UVIs.

Ensure Successful Development and Implementation of IUU Mechanisms by Coastal and Flag States

Flag and coastal States need effective legal and enforcement institutions to fully implement measures to combat IUU fishing. Without these institutions, IUU-related measures adopted by RFMOs will not have a meaningful impact on illegal fishing activities, undermining the effectiveness of management measures adopted at the domestic and RFMO levels. NOAA works with domestic and regional partners to support and improve fisheries management and enforcement efforts globally. Past cooperative efforts include assessing levels of IUU fishing, training for fisheries managers and enforcement agents, and facilitation of regional capacity for fisheries monitoring, control, and surveillance. By supporting countries' development and enforcement of domestic laws that prosecute IUU fishing, NOAA is leveling the playing field for U.S. fishermen.

In 2013, NOAA, in coordination with the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Coast Guard, and interested stakeholders, intends to continue and expand upon existing capacity building efforts with nations in the Pacific Islands, West Africa, the wider Caribbean and Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Partners will develop region-specific courses of action to meet the unique needs of each region.

¹Link to full report: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/slider_stories/2013/01/msra_2013_report.html

