



The Future for the American Seafood Industry

Good morning. Thank you for spending a little time with us this morning before the Show opens for the day.

As Laurel mentioned, I've been on the job for little over a year now. As many of you are well aware, 2010 was a very busy year at Fisheries for a number of reasons including the oil spill in the Gulf, but more importantly, it was a year when an important milestone was reached. 2010 was a year when we realized an important moment in our quest to end overfishing in US fisheries. So I am here this weekend in part to introduce myself - - but more importantly - - here at the International Boston Seafood Show - - to speak with you about how we can do a better job of telling the story of US fisheries, the management successes achieved, the environmental gains reached, and the business opportunity that our current management creates if we take full advantage of the moment.

Before I begin, I want to say that it is with great sadness that we have witnessed the devastation wrought by the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan. We are especially concerned about the safety and welfare of the



Japanese people. Our fisheries scientists in particular have a long history of collaboration and we have extended the offer of assistance to the Fisheries Agency of Japan to help revive the fisheries and associated infrastructures that have been impacted.

So, moving on to Boston – This is a city that’s been at the heart of the nation’s seafood trade since before our country’s founding – where “fish is about food” – which underscores the vital role seafood plays in our economy, in innovation, and in the jobs you all represent. Americans are the third largest consumers of seafood in the world. And I would note there are quite a few of those consumers within walking distance of not only this spot, but of some of our original US fisheries here in the northeast. This is also a place where the challenges of fisheries management - - and the benefits of doing it better - - are playing out daily in local newspapers.

Briefly, for those of you less familiar with what NOAA is and its mission in relation to seafood, let me give you some context. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – also called NOAA - was established in



1970. NOAA is part of the Department of Commerce and includes several scientific agencies. The most well known of those – even to some in this room - is the National Weather Service. Less well known in the public, are the Fisheries Service, Ocean Service, Ocean and Atmospheric Research Service, and our National Environmental Satellites Service. My agency – the National Marine Fisheries Service – is dedicated to the stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management and the promotion of healthy ecosystems in the U.S federal waters – 3 to 200 miles offshore. We conserve, protect, and manage living marine resources and ensure recreational and economic opportunities for the American public.

I am here today for four reasons:

1. To emphasize that the nation's fisheries are being actively monitored, managed and enforced to ensure their sustained use and abundance;
2. To highlight the importance of this year – 2011 – and the milestone it represents in reaching the national objective of sustainable fisheries and the supply of seafood;



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

3. To reach out and engage with you as members of the broader seafood supply industry and make our information more accessible and useful to you and your customers; and
4. To further focus and increase attention on the challenges that face us ahead.

NOAA Fisheries has been attending the Boston Seafood Show for many years – primarily through our trade and industry services and our seafood inspection program. However, in recent years, the issues surrounding sustainable seafood have increasingly emerged as areas of interest and focus for the businesses participating in the show, the customers they represent, and the jobs they provide.

We understand that fishing in all its forms is a \$72 billion per year business in the United States, and that business is vital to the economies and identities of our coastal communities. The economic activity generated by fisheries creates 1.9 million full- and part-time jobs, from the boat captains and crews, from the oyster farmers to the people in processing plants, trucks, seafood markets, and restaurants. We understand the relationship



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

between what we do at NOAA to rebuild and sustain fisheries and support domestic aquaculture and sustainable economic opportunities for the seafood industry and the communities they support.

We are making significant progress in ending overfishing and we are actively rebuilding the fish stocks on which the seafood-consuming public depends.

U.S. commercial fisheries and aquaculture – together with recreational fisheries -- support almost 2 million jobs and generates more than \$163 billion in sales. Our economists estimate that rebuilding all U.S. fish stocks would generate an additional \$31 billion in sales impacts, support an additional 500,000 jobs and increase the revenue fishermen receive at the dock by \$2.2 billion. *This is more than a 50 percent increase from the current annual dockside revenues.*



We're making progress rebuilding fisheries today because of the strength of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Briefly, Magnuson-Stevens set up a process by which the country's fishing activities were divided into eight

regional communities to pull together fishermen, local, state and tribal representatives, scientists and managers and organizations with vested interests to ensure the conservation and management of the fishery and marine resources in federal waters, from 3 to 200 miles off the coast. Since the original passage of Magnuson-Stevens in 1976, this process has evolved into an innovative, science-driven process by which the health and needs of the fisheries and their marine ecosystem are monitored. Scientific determinations dictate the biological boundaries and inform the management objectives for each council, which in-turn works with the fishermen and local communities to develop the regulatory strategies by which the fishery is harvested.

This regional approach has been developed and refined over 35 years with a tremendous amount of public investment and innovation by scientists,



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

fishermen and managers alike. And it has produced a process that is delivering results.

When Congress reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens in 2007, it took one additional and very important step - - it gave NOAA and the regional fishery management councils a clear mandate, new authority and new tools to achieve the goal of sustainable fisheries within measurable timeframes. Notable was the requirement for annual catch limits and accountability measures to prevent and end overfishing – a real game changer in our evolutionary journey and one that has demonstrated tangible results. I am happy to report that we are meeting the firm deadlines Congress laid before us. In 2010, annual catch limits and accountability measures for all stocks actively experiencing overfishing were in place, and we are on track to meet this year’s deadline of having annual catch limits in place – as required - for all 528 managed stocks and complexes comprising U.S. harvested fisheries – an enormous milestone in our nation’s journey to sustainably harvested fisheries.



Some encouraging stories that demonstrate this progress and how it is paying off for people, jobs, communities and ecosystems, involve some of the most iconic and popular species of fish. Over the next few years, we are confident the number of these good stories will continue to increase as we rebuild fish stocks.

This year's Alaska pollock catch will increase more than 50 percent over last year. This is the nation's largest fishery, one of the most sustainable fisheries in the world, and one of our top seafood exports. For 35 years, since the US took over fisheries management within the 200-mile exclusive economic zone, the Alaska pollock fishery has shown how important it is to follow the science and adjust catches to the biological fluctuations of the stock. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council and NOAA adjust the catch level each year based on the most up to date science. Fishermen respect the science and lower the catch when science shows it's needed. They raise it when the science shows a higher catch is sustainable, as it is this year. In the late 1990s, the pollock fishery moved to a catch share type



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

program to help eliminate the problems caused by a dangerous and wasteful race-to-fish process. This move provided conservation benefits and created a fishery with stable, family-wage jobs for commercial fishermen, fish processors and the many wholesale and retail businesses they supply.

We are also making significant progress here in the Northeast in rebuilding cod, haddock, flounder and other groundfish. This is the oldest fishery in our country and has seen some of the most intense fishing and overfishing. The good news is that when the 2011 groundfish season opens this May, fishermen will have higher catch levels for 12 of the 20 groundfish stocks. This is due to significant sacrifices of fishermen, strong science, and strong fishing regulations.

The new catch share management system, called sectors, is also helping fishermen maximize fishing while allowing weaker stocks to rebuild.



Despite the progress, we know that some in the fishermen in this fishery face extremely challenging economic times. Fishermen are struggling in large-part as a result of years of decline in fishing opportunity that accompanies overfishing. While we rebuild that opportunity, I must note that we are committed to helping all fishermen during this difficult transition so that diverse, thriving, family fishing businesses remain a part of working

waterfronts and our seafood supply chain around our coasts. Just last week, Secretary Locke announced a new effort, spearheaded by DOC's Economic Development Administration, bring new help to fishing communities in transition here in New England.

The Northeast is also home to some of the earliest success stories in rebuilding. The Atlantic sea scallop is one of those. Sea scallops were severely overfished in the early 1990s. With careful regulation and collaboration with scallop fishermen, the stock was rebuilt in 2001. It is now the top-valued fishery in the U.S., producing more than 58.3 million pounds valued at more than \$385.5 million in 2009. This is a five-fold increase in landings from the early 90s and an even greater increase in revenues.

In the Gulf, our fishermen and managers are actively rebuilding the red-snapper and grouper fisheries along with other popular Gulf species whose populations are trending up. And – as a result of the Deepwater spill - our scientific expertise in the field of seafood safety has never been more important as we work with FDA and the Gulf states to ensure that seafood from Gulf waters is and will continue to be safe.

But the U.S. – and more importantly U.S. fishermen cannot achieve the goal of fisheries sustainability alone. More than eighty percent of the seafood consumed in this country is imported. Sustainable management of ocean resources presents a global stewardship challenge. To help provide us with the authority and the leverage we need to more aggressively address the issue of illegal, unregulated and unreported, or IUU fisheries – a key topic at this year’s Show – The Magnuson-Stevens Act increased our international authorities to help us end illegal fishing around the globe so that foreign fishing fleets are held to the same high standards as U.S. fleets and not economically disadvantage our fishermen.



Let me shift gears now to another important topic of conversation this week - - How do we do a better job of getting out the word on the progress made in management of domestic fisheries? That, coupled with increasing awareness of the health benefits of seafood is a challenge, but one that we've taken on at NOAA Fisheries. We have established a website for consumers and retailers called 'FishWatch'. This site profiles the species I've just mentioned along with more than 80 others -- and more to come. FishWatch provides you and the consumer a thumb-nail profile of the status of these stocks, their ecosystem considerations, including issues of habitat and bycatch impacts associated with their harvest, and how these impacts are managed, monitored and controlled through the fishery management process. While there are many messages out in the market place, we know that US fisheries - - managed under the MSA and its prescriptive standards to base decisions on the best available science, protect habitat, minimize bycatch, and set sustainable harvest levels - - are inherently sustainable and have a valuable story to tell.



We are in initial stages of re-designing FishWatch and I hope you'll have an opportunity to visit our booth - #175 – where you can review a brand new design and give us your feedback on how to tell the complex management story that this nation has invested in – “from the ocean to your plate” – to ensure the U.S. harvested seafood is not overfished and is being harvested in a sustainable manner.

Part of the planned FishWatch redesign is to give more attention to farmed seafood which reflects NOAA's interest in fostering sustainable aquaculture. Without question aquaculture is and will continue to be a critical component of the U.S. seafood supply but we need to start growing more here at home. The U.S. is a nation that imports, and seafood is no exception. Right now, we import 84 percent of the seafood we consume and half of that is farmed. It's ironic since U.S. researchers pioneered many of the techniques that are now used worldwide in commercial and restoration aquaculture. We need to return to that era of innovation and



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

start the ball rolling again here at home. In order to support that, NOAA recently released a draft aquaculture policy for public comment. I encourage you to take a look and give us your comments and recommendations. Comments are due April 11. See Laurel if you would like more information.

Before I conclude my remarks I want to introduce some of the staff from NOAA Fisheries who are here with me and available to discuss the various issues involved with U.S. seafood that I've raised here today.

Linda Chaves, whom I suspect many of you know, is my Senior Advisor on Seafood Industry Issues. Years ago, Linda had the foresight to represent NOAA's Fisheries Service at the Boston Seafood Show. She's also responsible for ensuring NOAA has representation in the EU and Asia to facilitate information with trade partners.



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

Also with me are Stephane “VRI-NEAU”, our NOAA representative to the E.U. He will be holding a workshop in this room later today at 2:30 on Seafood Export Facilitation.

Also with me are Tim Hansen and Steve Wilson of our Seafood Inspection Program. Tim and Steve are recognized experts on seafood safety issues and a critical link to the seafood industry, including wholesalers and retailers. They also played a critical role in our operations in the Gulf last year and our evaluation of seafood safety during the oil spill. Their team will be holding a workshop here at 3:30 today.

Also with us is Dr. John Stein, who is the Acting Director of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle. John also leads NOAA’s seafood safety effort in the Gulf. He was a key architect in developing the testing

for petroleum and dispersants in seafood harvested from the Gulf during the spill and continues to serve in this role as we ensure consumers that seafood from the Gulf is safe.



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

Also, Dr. Michael Rubino, head of NOAA's Aquaculture Program, is with us today and will be speaking later this morning on a panel discussing the role of aquaculture in the global seafood supply. He will be available to discuss the new policy and the process for providing us with your input.

With regard to our activities addressing IUU fisheries, Chris Rogers from our International Affairs Office and Sandra Sharp from our Seafood Inspection Lab in Pascagoula, Mississippi, will hold a workshop here at 1 p.m. today for importers and brokers. They'll be talking about some of the measures we've put in place to prevent the import of illegally caught fish. IUU fishing is a global problem that affects our efforts to rebuild depleted fish stocks globally. It undermines the price U.S. fishermen get for their product and undermines consumer confidence despite that fact that our fishing industry abides by some of the highest environmental standards in the world. We are working to see foreign fishing fleets play by the same high standards to protect global fisheries.

And Laurel Bryant from NOAA Fisheries External Affairs will be part of a panel this afternoon at 4 focused on consumers and diners interests in



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

sustainable seafood. One of the ways we're trying to promote this is through our FishWatch website.

Laurel, Katie Semon, our Project Manager of Fishwatch, and Maggie Mooney-Seus, our Public Affairs Officer in the Northeast Region, are all here to take your questions and input.

Bill Zahner of our Communications Office has a flyer with all the workshops and staff that are available to discuss these issues. I hope you'll have an opportunity to stop by our booth #175 to meet with them and give us your comments on FishWatch.

In closing I want to leave you with some parting thoughts I believe are important to help the issue of sustainable fisheries in the U.S. to move forward:

The management of the seafood harvested and sold in the U.S. is guided by 10 National Standards which are designed to end overfishing and



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

rebuild and sustain the fishery being executed. Your customers can feel confident that by purchasing U.S. seafood they are supporting the fishermen and their commitment to stewardship.

Ending overfishing and sustaining harvests are not black and white -- like crossing a finish line. Rather – sustainability must be actively maintained in a constantly changing, dynamic environment. What is sustainably harvested one year may experience a rate of overfishing the next – and vice-versa. Our best managed fisheries like Alaska Pollock have demonstrated stock increases and declines over and over again. The key is having a process in place that is capable of identifying the level and quickly responding by dictating any necessary changes in harvest that managers then implement. That’s the process we have in the U.S.

We need to better communicate this story, build better public literacy about the sustainable fisheries, and move forward together to meet the larger challenges that face our global ocean and the stable supply of safe, sustainable seafood we will rely on. We are committed, with you and with US fishermen, to doing a better job of telling that story.



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



Remarks by Eric Schwaab for the International Boston Seafood Show, March 21

Thanks for your time. I look forward to your questions.

###