

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 3, 2011

Dr. Jane Lubchenco  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room 5128  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Mr. Eric C. Schwaab  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1315 East West Highway  
Room 14636  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Under Secretary Lubchenco and Assistant Administrator Schwaab:

We are writing to request the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provide guidance to Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs) regarding the implementation of its Catch Share Policy.

Catch share programs are a fisheries management tool that, based on experience, are expected to provide economic and environmental benefits in some fisheries. However, concerns have been raised that catch shares could also have impacts on fishing communities, such as consolidation of fishing effort and quota, and potential disproportionate impacts on smaller fishing communities. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 (MSA 2006) authorized the development of community associations to mitigate such impacts, including Fishing Communities and Regional Fishing Associations. In addition, related tools have since emerged, including Community Fishing Associations and bycatch risk pools.

Several catch share programs are currently being developed across the country as deemed appropriate by RFMCs. Realizing there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing such concerns, we encourage NMFS to provide additional guidance to RFMCs on potential options to help local fishing communities adapt to catch share programs, including:

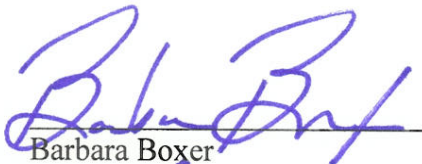
1. Strategies for the RFMCs to involve fishing communities at an early stage in the decision-making process to determine if catch shares and/or community associations are appropriate and ensure that the diverse needs of different communities are addressed.


2. Suggested approaches for the development of community associations or other mechanisms to retain local jobs and fishing heritage in traditional fishing-dependent communities.
3. Mechanisms for monitoring the economic and environmental impacts of catch shares following their implementation, so that best practices can be identified and adjustments can be made as needed.
4. Cost-effective monitoring techniques (such as vessel monitoring systems combined with video monitoring) to help smaller-scale fishermen adjust to the monitoring requirements of catch shares.

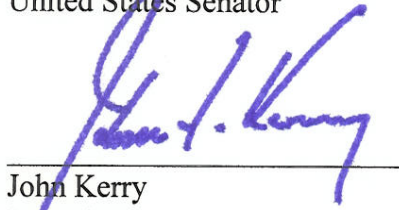
Fishing is an important economic driver in many of our nation's coastal communities, and protecting this resource is even more essential now than ever as our nation struggles to rebound from the economic downturn. We ask that NMFS provide the necessary guidance during the implementation of its Catch Share Policy to ensure a vibrant future for our local fishing economies.

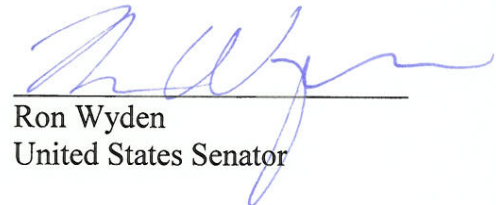
Thank you for your consideration of this vital issue affecting our fishing communities.

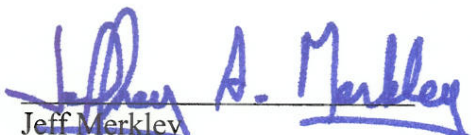
Sincerely,

  
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator

  
Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

  
John Kerry  
United States Senator

  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

  
Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Mark Begich  
United States Senator

  
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

  
Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress