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Community
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Community Fishing Associations

Strengthening Alaska's Fishing Communities Amidst the Gulf of Alaska Catch Share Program

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is in the process of developing a catch share program (rationalization) for the Gulf of Alaska trawl fishery. As the current title suggests, the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Trawl Bycatch Management Program is in response to a growing management concern: bycatch of critical species, particularly Chinook salmon, halibut and Tanner crab in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries.

Catch share programs or individual transferable quota (ITQs) programs allocate a specific portion of the fishery resource to participants thus ending the 'race for fish' and providing the trawl fleet with the tools needed to reduce bycatch. Nevertheless, nearly 20 years of direct experience with catch share programs in Alaska demonstrates clearly how catch share programs can adversely impact fishing dependent coastal communities. The problems encountered in catch share programs in Alaska and around the world are widespread, well-documented and now predictable. These include:

- absentee ownership of quota
- fewer locally based vessels
- high leasing fees
- rapid vessel consolidation
- consolidation of quota ownership
- lower crew pay and job loss
- out-migration of fisheries based wealth and fishery access opportunities from communities



WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FISHING ASSOCIATION?

Direct allocations to fishing communities were authorized in the 2006 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). Under this provision, fishing communities are eligible to receive initial allocations of quota, or to purchase or hold quota. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council held a workshop on Community Fishing Associations (CFAs) at their Seattle meeting in February 2014 to inform the Council and other North Pacific stakeholders on key issues and elements that need to be considered in order to facilitate the inclusion of a CFA in a GOA Bycatch Management Program. The workshop provided valuable real-world examples of how CFAs benefit communities, support new generations of fishermen, and promote growth and stability of fishing businesses.

There is a NEW management construct, proven successful on both the east and west coasts, that can help mitigate the community impacts caused by catch share programs: Community Fishing Associations (CFAs). CFAs ensure that a portion of the fishing quota is anchored in the community in perpetuity. The strongest CFAs have quota allocated at the time a catch share program is started. Quota allocated to the community is then used to address community goals of keeping a local fleet, encouraging participation by future fishermen, equitable crew compensation and vessel/owner residency. Creating a CFA as part of the GOA Bycatch Management Plan will enable Gulf of Alaska communities to address some of the adverse community impacts associated with rationalizing fisheries.

HOW WILL A CFA STRENGTHEN GOA FISHING COMMUNITIES UNDER A CATCH SHARE PROGRAM?

1. CFAs effectively anchor quota to communities in perpetuity.

Anchoring quota to communities will provide a local management tool that should ensure long-term multiplier of benefits, especially fish dollars, to local communities. Anchoring quota to communities allows the community to leverage its quota to encourage fishermen to deliver to the community, remain in the community, use community services and infrastructure and treat crew equitably.

2. CFAs support new generations of fishermen, including crew and new entrants.

CFAs are often designed to help transition fishermen without adequate capital into a new fishery and they also can be used to acknowledge crew as real stakeholders. CFAs can include crew contracts and codes of conduct as a way to protect crew from reduced compensation because of lease rates for quota transferred within a catch share program.

3. Initial allocation of quota to CFAs amplifies community benefits.

Initial allocation of quota to communities is critical to buffering initial changes caused by catch shares. Initial allocation of fishing quota to communities via the CFA will advance community protections by years if not generations as the community works to build or rebuild strong local businesses and enable positive local impacts.

4. CFAs provide for community involvement and diversity within decision-making.

CFAs offer a way to include fishermen and community perspectives in the operation and decision-making processes which impact local communities and businesses. The inclusion of community perspectives in decision-making processes ensures that the variety of participants and stakeholders in local communities benefit from local fishery resources.

Summary

Healthy fishing communities depend on healthy ecosystems, but they also depend on fisheries access, second generation fishermen transitioning into the fishery and local participation. A CFA structure can strengthen the emerging GOA catch share program and help to ensure that the program benefits Gulf of Alaska coastal communities. Looking back on our experience over the past 20 years and identifying the negative impacts catch share programs have had on fishing communities elsewhere makes clear: Now is the time for Alaska catch share programs to include the CFA management tool.

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Community Fishing Associations



**STRENGTHENING ALASKA'S FISHING
COMMUNITIES AMIDST A GULF OF ALASKA
CATCH SHARE PROGRAM**

**Presentation to the House Fisheries Committee
March 6, 2014**





Presentation Overview



1. Context: Gulf of Alaska Bycatch Management Program;
2. Lessons learned from past programs;
3. What is a CFA?
4. How a CFA can help protect Alaska's communities in a Gulf of Alaska catch share program;
5. Next steps.





Background: Gulf of Alaska Bycatch Management Program



The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) is in the process of designing a Gulf of Alaska bycatch management program:

- Declines in Chinook salmon, halibut and Tanner crab have made bycatch reduction imperative;
- Focus of the bycatch management program is giving the trawl fleet “tools” to reduce bycatch;
- Program development to date indicates this is likely to be a “catch share” or “rationalization” program.



Lessons Learned from Past Catch Share Programs



Impacts can include:

- absentee ownership of quota
- high leasing fees
- rapid vessel consolidation
- consolidation of quota ownership
- lower crew pay and job loss
- out-migration of fishing rights and wealth from rural communities





What is a CFA?



- Community Fishing Associations (CFAs) are a tool for protecting communities within catch share programs;
- Successful examples in Cape Cod, Morro Bay, developing nationwide;
- Direct allocations to fishing communities were authorized in the 2006 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act;
- CFA Model: The CFA is allocated quota, then leases it to current participants and new entrants based on criteria developed by the CFA.



How a CFA Can Protect Communities in a GOA Catch Share Program



- 1. CFAs effectively anchor quota to communities in perpetuity.***

No other tool ensures that the quota itself remains in the community.





How a CFA Can Protect Communities in a GOA Catch Share Program



2. CFAs support new generations of fishermen, including crew and new entrants.



CFAs can provide fishermen with an opportunity to enter into the fishery, providing access for coastal Alaska communities.



How a CFA Can Protect Communities in a GOA Catch Share Program



3. Initial allocation of quota to CFAs amplifies community benefits.

Initial allocation of fishing quota to communities via the CFA will advance community protections as the community works to maintain and build strong, local businesses.



How a CFA Can Protect Communities in a GOA Catch Share Program



4. CFAs provide for community involvement and diversity within decision-making.



By providing ownership in the resource, CFAs ensure that community values are reflected in decision-making.



Next Steps



- April 2014: NPFMC developing options for analysis for Gulf of Alaska management program;
- CFAs are not part of the current set of options – the State of Alaska and the NPFMC need to hear that Alaskans want an allocation to CFAs to be included in the options for an analysis.



Conclusion



- A CFA presents an opportunity to ensure that coastal communities retain the ability to access the fisheries outside their front doors;
- This option needs to be included for analysis, and it should be supported by the State of Alaska: CFAs are good for Alaska and Alaskans.