



NOAA's Draft Catch Shares Policy



In December 2009 NOAA released a draft policy on the use of catch share programs in fishery management plans. The draft NOAA policy encourages voluntary use of well-designed catch share programs to help rebuild fisheries and sustain fishermen, communities and vibrant working waterfronts. NOAA is seeking broad public input on the draft policy until April 10, 2010. This primer provides basic information about catch shares, summarizes the policy, and provides links to additional resources and information.

What is a “Catch Share?” “Catch Share” is a generic term for a range of fishery management programs that allocate a specific portion of the total allowable fishery catch to individuals, cooperatives, communities, or other entities including sectors. In practice a fisherman typically receives a secure but temporary privilege (not entitlement) to harvest a specific quantity of fish. The recipient is obligated to limit their catch to no more than their allocation. The term encompasses specific programs defined in statutes such as Limited Access Privilege Programs (LAPPs) and Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs).

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“To achieve long-term ecological and economic sustainability of the Nation’s fishery resources and fishing communities, NOAA encourages the consideration and adoption of catch shares wherever appropriate in fishery management and ecosystem plans and amendments and will support the design, implementation, and monitoring of catch share programs.”

What does the draft policy mean?

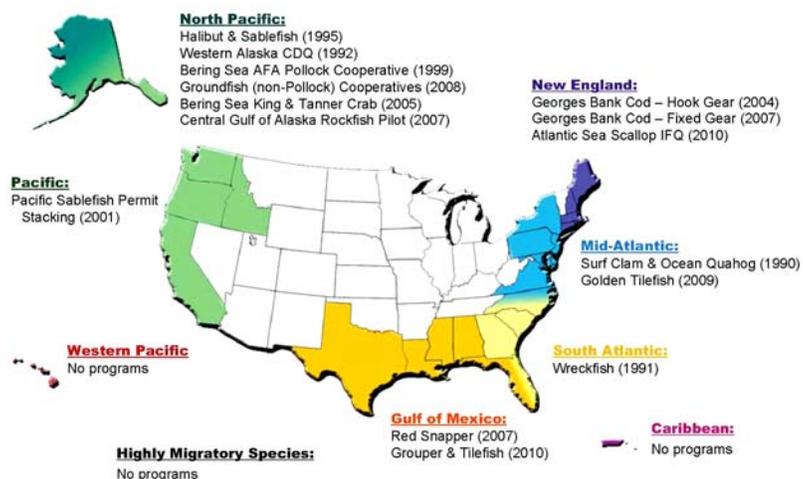
The draft policy is a foundation for the wide-spread consideration of catch shares, and encourages local fishermen to be part of the process. It does not mandate or require the use of catch shares for any fishery or sector. The policy stresses adherence to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) legal and policy requirements for the use of catch shares. Special emphasis is placed on identifying specific management goals, ensuring long term fishing community stability, encouraging participation and fair treatment of all individuals and sectors, conducting thorough analysis of initial allocation and transfer provisions, and careful monitoring and adjustment of management plans over time.

NOAA's goals are to reduce administrative or organizational impediments to the consideration of catch shares; inform and educate stakeholders of the different options and capabilities of catch share programs; and help organize collaborative efforts with interested Councils, states, communities, fishermen and other stakeholders on the design and implementation of catch share programs.

Why Catch Shares?

1. NOAA is committed to ensuring healthy and productive oceans, essential to life on earth and for generating economic and social benefits. Sustainable fisheries are an essential component of that commitment. Catch share programs have proven to be powerful tools in rebuilding underperforming fisheries and maintaining long term productivity. The draft NOAA policy helps ensure well-designed catch share programs.
2. Relative to other programs, catch share programs can increase fishermen's flexibility in choosing how to meet their allocations.
3. By knowing their share of the catch is secure, catch shares allow fishermen to be more selective about when and how they

Catch Share Programs by Region



catch their allocation. This eliminates the “race to fish” and the stimulus to overinvest in larger vessels and more gear that result in “overcapacity.”

4. With more time to catch their limit, fishermen can tailor activities in response to weather, market and individual business conditions. Fishing can be more efficient and safe.
5. Well designed catch share programs can reduce overfishing and decrease bycatch while promoting environmental stewardship since the value of a fisherman’s share is in direct proportion to the health of the fishery resource.



Frequently Asked Questions

▪ *Are catch shares appropriate for every fishery?*

Councils should consider the appropriateness of catch share programs and decide if a fishery may benefit from their use. Catch shares designed for federal fisheries under authority of the MSA have a great deal of design flexibility to accomplish a variety of goals. Each fishery is different and an explicit evaluation of all management alternatives, including catch shares, is necessary to determine which approach is best suited for each fishery.

▪ *Will new entrants or small businesses be excluded from acquiring shares?*

Catch share programs usually make initial allocations to current participants in proportion to

their historical participation and catch. Councils have a range of tools under LAPPs to promote the participation of small owner-operated fishing vessels and to include measures to assist entry level and small owner-operators, captains, and crew through set-asides, loans and other options.

▪ *Will catch shares result in excessive control of the industry by a few large fishing companies?*

NMFS and the Councils are required by law to ensure no one acquires an excessive share of the privileges in the program by establishing a maximum share and any other limitations or measures necessary to prevent inequitable concentration. Many means are available under the MSA to control the initial distribution and subsequent possession, use, sale or transfer of fishing privileges.

Design Characteristics of Catch Shares

Because a fishery management plan can encompass a variety of goals, each catch share program should be designed to meet the specific goals of a particular fishery. Factors to consider when designing a catch share include:

- Eligibility – who participates in the program?
- Allocation – how should shares be apportioned?
- Duration – how long do quota shares last?
- Transferability – when and how can participants transfer or sell their shares, and to whom?
- Preventing excessive shares – how can NMFS prevent inequitable concentration?
- Protecting existing community and business sectors – how to ensure the stability and participation of traditional operations?
- Monitoring/Enforcement – how to ensure compliance?
- Cost recovery - the MSA requires at least partial cost recovery from LAPP programs.
- Royalty payments – should royalty payments be collected for the use of the public’s fishery resources?

Resources

To facilitate the development of catch share programs, NOAA’s FY 2010 budget includes \$6.0 million for Limited Access Privilege Programs and \$18.6 million to help transition the New England groundfish fishery to a sector-based catch share system.

Links

NOAA Fisheries Catch Shares Homepage:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/catchshares>

NOAA Draft Catch Share Policy
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/domes_fish/catchshare/docs/draft_noaa_cs_policy.pdf

Submit a Comment on Draft NOAA Policy
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/catchsharecomments>

The Design and Use of Limited Access Privilege Programs:
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/PartnershipsCommunications/lapp/design_and_useLAPs2007.pdf