

Catch Shares Task Force Status Report – September 4, 2009

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This is the fifth in a series of reports on the status of the NOAA Catch Shares Task Force.

The Catch Share Task Force held its third conference call on Wednesday afternoon August 26, 2009. This call began by soliciting comments on a draft policy statement prepared by NOAA staff. Task Force members were asked to reflect on the components of the draft NOAA policy statement, including several key foundational and supporting principles. Proposed principles emphasized flexibility and choice in the design and consideration of catch shares; non-binding criteria for evaluating catch share applicability; fair and equitable treatment for all fishery sectors; the desire for community sustainability; resource rent considerations; the overlap between catch shares and limited access privilege programs; performance monitoring of catch shares; and resource requirements. Many comments were received on the goals and principles of the policy, including its applicability to different fishery sectors, and the importance of ensuring sustainable fishing communities. Task Force participants were also asked for their ideas on how to ensure thorough engagement of all constituent groups during the forthcoming policy review and comment period. Suggestions included targeting communication strategies at the regional level, not just the national level, and to directly address the specific concerns of different segments of our constituency.

The draft policy statement is scheduled to be publicly released for review and comment later this month. The Task Force continues to identify regional meetings and venues to present and discuss the draft policy. Foremost among these are the next round of Regional Fishery Management Council meetings which NOAA Leadership will attend. In addition, during this 90+-day public comment period, views of the public will be directly solicited electronically via email and the internet.

General public comments regarding catch shares in anticipation of the draft policy are already being received via email. The email address (catchshares@noaa.gov) and information about the activities of the Catch Share Task Force continue to be provided to the public on the NMFS website (www.nmfs.noaa.gov/catchshares). We are looking forward to expanding the scope of the web site to bring additional information to the public about catch shares best practices based on case studies. In the meantime, thank you to everyone who is expressing an interest in catch shares and participating in the public process on this important and complex issue.