

## **New West Coast Groundfish Catch Shares Program Brings Ecological and Economic Benefits to Coastal Communities (continued)**

Fishermen in the trawl fleet will no longer depend on a single, fleet-wide quota to determine how many fish can be sustainably harvested. The traditional practice encouraged fishermen to compete with each other to catch as many fish as possible before the fleet's allocation was met and the fishery closed—creating a grueling and dangerous race that produced inequity among fishermen and perpetuated broad economic inefficiency, as indicated by the financial instability of the West Coast trawl fishery. By contrast, the new catch shares system divides the total amount of an overall allowable catch or quota into shares controlled by individual fishermen. These shares can be harvested at the fishermen's discretion, ideally more efficiently and at more profitable marketing times.



### **What are the benefits of the new catch share program?**

The new management scheme is designed to benefit both fish and fishermen.

The catch share program holds fishermen accountable for their deliberate catch as well as bycatch. This means that all fish harvested are deducted from the fisherman's personal quota, including fish that are discarded. Traditionally, fishermen could throw unwanted catch overboard—an unsound environmental practice—and those fish were not directly deducted from the fisherman's limit. Now, to protect their individual shares and the resource fishermen are incentivized to avoid bycatch. The new system will help to reduce the risk of overfishing, stabilize the fishery and create sustainable fishing opportunity for communities all along the Pacific Coast.

In addition, catch shares will increase net economic benefit and create individual economic stability by giving trawl fishermen the opportunity to fully harvest their designated quotas. This can be done in a number of ways. Fishermen can fish their own allocation, they can form cooperatives to pool their shares, thereby minimizing costs and increasing financial yields, or they can trade, lease or sell their shares. This helps fishermen who have smaller shares of a fishery or those who simply want to get out of the business.

The catch shares management model will help sustain fishing jobs and the communities that depend on them by making the remaining jobs and communities more profitable. In 2010, the Pacific groundfish trawl fishery was worth approximately \$35 million to fishing communities from Bellingham, WA to Morro Bay, CA. Economic assessments suggest that the fishery is incurring losses, or at best breaking even. Under the new catch shares program, after accounting for the additional costs of management, the shorebased trawl fishery is expected to see a potential net gain of at least \$4 million annually.

The new program has the support of the trawl fishing industry and was developed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, a quasi-governmental body working with NOAA fisheries to produce fishery management plans for the West Coast.

**For more catch share information please see:**

***NOAA Fisheries Northwest Regional Website:***

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Groundfish-Halibut/Groundfish-Fishery-Management/Trawl-Program/index.cfm>

***Pacific Fishery Management Council's Website:***

<http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/fishery-management-plan/fmp-amendment-20/>

