



**Marine
Fish
Conservation
Network**

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Contact: Brooks Mountcastle, 717-221-0148
bmountcastle@conservefish.org

Congress Moves to Halt Corporatization of Fisheries

Mid-Atlantic Fishermen Concerned About Harm to Fishing Communities, Want National Standards

HARRISBURG, PA – Coastal U.S. Representatives today introduced the “Fishing Quota Standards Act of 2005” to ensure that individual fishing quota (IFQ) systems, often touted as the management solution to our declining fisheries, would give fair and equitable opportunities to small-boat fishermen and fishing communities and would responsibly protect marine environments. Currently, fisheries managers in the mid-Atlantic are exploring an individual quota program for the tilefish fishery despite the shortcomings of a previous program in the region.

The surfclam and ocean quahog IFQ program - fisheries that are conducted off the coast of New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland - resulted in drastic consolidation in both the fishing and processing sectors, causing significant job loss in coastal communities. According to the General Accounting Office, from 1990 to 2002, the number of surfclam and ocean quahog quota holders decreased by about 17 and 34 percent, respectively. Roughly 58 percent of the surfclam quota consolidation and 36 percent of the ocean quahog quota consolidation occurred by the start of the second year of the program. One entity controlled quota held in 12 different names, accounting for 27 percent of the 2002 total surfclam quota allocated. Similar results were found in the ocean quahog fishery.

“I’m very concerned that IFQ systems will reduce recreational fishing opportunities and hurt coastal communities in the mid-Atlantic. The only IFQ systems in this region put lots of the surfclam and ocean quahog fishermen out of work. I think the national standards in this bill will help make sure any new IFQ programs will work like they’re supposed to,” said Tom Fote of the Jersey Coast Anglers Association, an association of more than 75 saltwater fishing clubs.

IFQ systems use quota shares to give fishermen exclusive access to a fixed percentage of the total annual quota in a fishery. The Bush Administration promoted these systems in its U.S. Ocean Action Plan released in December in response to the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy report as the primary way to stop declining fish populations.

“Individual fishing quotas can be an effective fishery management tool if and only if strong national standards are in place to protect fish populations, the marine environment, and the interests of fishing communities,” said Lee Crockett, executive director of the Marine Fish Conservation Network. “This bill creates a solution to the potential pitfalls of quota systems and ensures that they accomplish all that their proponents want them to.”

Documented research has shown that IFQ systems without strong national standards often create multiple economic and environmental problems. For example, IFQ systems give an unfair advantage to large corporations and industry participants who have more capital to buyout other quota share holders. These systems also create incentives to throw less valuable fish back dead or dying, and to promote stewardship only for fish species with a high market value.

The Fishing Quota Standards Act of 2005 would:

- Require IFQ systems to demonstrate strong conservation performance, such as reducing bycatch (the catching and killing of non-target species) and protecting essential fish habitat, or be subject to modification or limitation during system renewal.
- Prevent fishermen from holding shares in perpetuity and excluding other participants by determining that quota shares are not property rights and may be renewed every seven years.
- Recover the direct costs of the IFQ system, including enforcement, management, and data collection.
- Prevent industry monopolies by limiting quota ownership to one percent of the total quota unless a council can demonstrate that such an increase will not be detrimental to other shareholders.
- Allocate quota fairly among vessel categories and gear types, giving initial preference to fishermen who have a long history of participating in the fishery.
- Allow fair access to new entrants, including entry-level fishermen, small vessel owners, and crew members.

NOTE: For more information on the risks of IFQ programs, please see the attached fact sheet, "Fishing Quota Standards Act of 2005," or visit <http://www.conservefish.org/site/mediacenter/pressreleases/>.

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The Marine Fish Conservation Network is a coalition of over 175 national and regional environmental organizations, commercial and recreational fishing groups, aquariums, and marine science groups dedicated to conserving marine fish and to promoting their long-term sustainability. For more information, please visit www.conservefish.org