



**Marine  
Fish  
Conservation  
Network**

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## **Congress Moves to Halt Corporatization of Fisheries** *West Coast Fishermen Concerned About Loss of Jobs, Fishing Communities*

PORTLAND, OR – Coastal U.S. Representatives today introduced the “Fishing Quota Standards Act of 2005” to ensure that individual quota 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, some in the west coast fishing industry are seeking an individual fishing quota (IFQ) system for the \$58 million west coast groundfish fishery.

“What fishermen fear the most with quota systems is that bigger players will buy up all of the quota shares leaving smaller fishermen high and dry,” said Gary Soderstrom, a commercial fisherman from Clatskanie, OR and president of the Columbia River Fishermen’s Protective Union, one of the oldest commercial fishing associations in the nation. “Fishing is still bread and butter for many families on the coast and consolidation of quota shares threatens those families and their communities.”

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.

Documented research, however, has shown IFQ systems without strong standards 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. And when quota shares end up in the hands of processors and others not engaged in the fishing, fishermen are relegated to the status of “seafaring sharecroppers.” Moreover, these systems create incentives to throw less valuable fish back dead or dying, and to promote stewardship only for fish species with a high market value.

“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 for the Marine Fish Conservation Network, a coalition of conservationists and fishermen. “This legislation creates a solution to the potential pitfalls of quota systems and ensures that they accomplish all that their proponents want them to.”

“What we’re seeing happening with most IFQ programs is the elimination of family fishermen in favor of corporate interests that have little or no connection to fishing communities,” said Zeke Grader,

executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations. "The standards in this legislation will go a long ways toward preserving our nation's remaining fishing communities."

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, "The 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](http://www.conservefish.org)