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Introduction

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Samuel D. Rauch and I am the Acting Assistant Administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in the Department of Commerce. NMFS is dedicated to the stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management. Much of this work occurs under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), which sets forth standards for conservation, management, and the sustainable use of our Nation's fisheries resources.

The fisheries management process established under the Magnuson-Stevens Act has established the United States (U.S.) as a recognized global leader in responsibly managed fisheries and sustainable seafood. My testimony today will focus on the progress we have made, together with our partners, in implementing the Magnuson-Stevens Act to end overfishing in the U.S. and ensure our Nation's fisheries are sustainable.

Success under the Magnuson-Stevens Act

In the U.S., we manage to Maximum Sustainable Yield, which makes sustainability our standard. We manage 446 stocks and stock complexes under 46 fishery management plans that are monitored to ensure their effectiveness and adjusted as needed. Fishery management plans are dynamic, science-based strategies for stewardship. They are developed through a highly participatory and public process that ensures the standards of sustainability established by the Magnuson-Stevens Act are met, while satisfying the needs of stakeholders for access to fishery resources. This process and system is successful. We have rebuilt 33 stocks since 2000. In our most recent annual report to Congress on the Status of Stocks, we reported that the number of stocks subject to overfishing and the number of overfished stocks were at an all-time low – for stocks with known status, 79 percent were not overfished and 87 percent were not experiencing

overfishing. Sustainable fisheries provide economic, social, and cultural opportunities for commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishermen, and serve as an economic engine for fishing-related businesses and coastal communities. The quantity and value of commercial U.S. wild-caught fisheries was up in 2011 while recreational catch remained stable. U.S. commercial fishermen landed 9.9 billion pounds of seafood valued at $5.3 billion in 2011, which reflects an increase of 1.6 billion pounds (20%) and $827 million (18%) over 2010 figures. 2011 saw the highest landings volume since 1997 and highest value in nominal terms ever recorded.[1]

The seafood industry—harvesters, seafood processors and dealers, seafood wholesalers and seafood retailers, including imports and multiplier effects—generated $129 billion in sales impacts and $37 billion in income impacts, and supported 1.2 million jobs in 2011. Recreational fishing generated $70 billion in sales impacts, $21 billion in income impacts, and supported 455,000 jobs in 2011. Jobs supported by commercial businesses held steady from the previous year, while jobs generated by the recreational fishing industry represented a 40 percent increase over 2010.[2]

This success did not happen overnight. Our Nation's journey toward sustainable fisheries has evolved over the past 37 years, starting in earnest when Congress first passed the Magnuson-Stevens Act. With that visionary law and the public process of accountability it established, Congress set a legislative standard for U.S. fisheries that led to the level of sustainability we see in our fisheries today. The Magnuson-Stevens Act galvanized the commitment of the U.S. to conservation and management of our fisheries that has evolved into the dynamic, adaptable process currently at work.

We are also a model for other nations. In 2008, the Fisheries Centre at the University of British Columbia spearheaded an extensive analysis of the most active fishing countries in the world.[3] They evaluated the published and unpublished literature, and probed expert opinion to answer questions about adherence to Article 7 of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which covers fisheries management. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to facilitate comprehensive and balanced development of fisheries and aquaculture, encompassing the long-term sustainable utilization of fishery resources in harmony with the environment and the use of capture and aquaculture practices that are not harmful to ecosystems, resources or their quality. The U.S. ranked number 2 overall out of 53 countries, second only to Norway, which manages substantially fewer stocks than the U.S.: 15 stocks of marine fish, 4 stocks of shellfish, and 5 aquaculture stocks.

[1] National Marine Fisheries Service. 2012. Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2011. U.S. Dept. Commerce, NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-F/SPO-118, 175p. Available at: https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/publication/index
[2] Ibid.
[3] Pitcher, T.J., Pramod, G., Kalikoski, D. and Short, K. 2008. Safe Conduct? Twelve Years Fishing under the. UN Code. WWF, Gland, Switzerland. 66pp.

The National Standards for Conservation and Management

The U.S. model of fisheries management I've described does not have an end-point. Rather, it is a science-based, public, and transparent process designed to prevent and stop overfishing. It is based on continuous monitoring and enforcement. Since 1976 when Congress first passed the Magnuson-Stevens Act, through the most recent reauthorization of the Act in 2007, the National Standards for Conservation and Management have been the statutory benchmarks for responsible management and sustainable fisheries in the U.S. Fisheries meeting these standards have successfully undergone the public process and accountability procedures established by Congress for stewardship of our Nation's fisheries resources. The 2007 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act provided a clear mandate, new authority, and new tools to achieve the goal of sustainable fisheries within measurable timeframes. Notable among these were the requirements for annual catch limits and accountability measures to prevent, respond to, and end overfishing. These are among the strictest standards in the world, and our approach is being emulated by other countries.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act created a unique, highly participatory management structure centered on the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils to meet these sustainability goals. This structure ensures that input and decisions about how to manage U.S. fisheries develops through a "bottom up" process that includes fishermen, other fishery stakeholders, affected States, tribal governments, and the Federal government.

Our progress in achieving the goal of sustainable fisheries is founded on the principle that management is based on sound science. National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates that all fisheries conservation and management measures must be based upon "the best scientific information available." NMFS management targets are set through science-based standards, and our extensive science program includes well-integrated data collection and cooperative research programs that feed into the process for setting these targets. This has, in turn, led to improved productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishery-dependent businesses.

In addition to the 10 National Standards, under which each federally managed fishery must operate, every Magnuson-Stevens Act fishery complies with the protection and conservation requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act, and are managed using the holistic environmental planning requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. The result: domestic fisheries that are among the most sustainably managed in the world, taking into account target catch, bycatch, and other ecosystem impacts.

IUU Fishing is a Global Problem

The stability of our fisheries and the livelihoods of U.S. fishermen are challenged every day by activities on the international front. For instance, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, also called IUU or pirate fishing, is a global problem that threatens ocean ecosystems and

impacts fisheries, food security, and coastal communities around the world. Experts estimate that the global value of economic losses from IUU fishing range between $10 billion and $23.5 billion annually, representing between 11 and 26 million tons.[4] By dodging conservation and management measures, companies engaging in IUU fishing cut corners and lower their operating costs. As a result, their illegally caught products provide unfair competition for law-abiding fishermen and seafood industries in the marketplace, and can undercut the sustainability of international and U.S. fisheries. NMFS is working to ensure that high demand for seafood does not create incentives for illegal fishing activity. Working in partnership with other Federal agencies, foreign governments and entities, international organizations, non-government organizations, and the private sector is crucial to effectively combating IUU fishing.

Recognizing the Sacrifices and Commitment of U.S. Fishermen

In the U.S., our fishermen's commitment to and investment in stewardship and sustainable resources has not come without sacrifice. We need to build on their commitment and ensure these successes are rewarded in the marketplace. Despite the globally recognized strength of U.S. fisheries management, U.S. seafood is often perceived as operating under the same ineffective management plaguing many global fisheries. This is simply not true.

Moreover, many U.S. wholesalers, processors, retailers, vendors, and consumers are unaware of the sustainability of U.S. fisheries. The agency is taking a proactive role in telling the story of the success of U.S. fisheries, using a variety of approaches to highlight the value, quality, and sustainability of U.S. harvested and farmed seafood. *FishWatch* is the internet-based informational platform the agency uses to educate consumers on the responsible management of U.S. fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the dynamic, science-based process behind sustainability. *FishWatch* delivers neutral, regularly updated information on seafood harvested in the U.S. The page introduces consumers to the dynamic process of sustainably managing living resources in an ever-changing ocean environment. This tool also provides factual information about the biological and ecological status of a fishery and lets users draw their own conclusions relative to satisfying a purchasing standard, based on science provided by NMFS. We continue to improve the content of *FishWatch* and explore opportunities for expanding its reach.

To assist sellers, the agency, at its discretion, issues declarative public statements in the form of letters in response to requests from harvest sector groups on whether a particular fishery is "sustainably managed" based on the Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards. In those letters, we highlight the fact that, in the U.S., we have virtually eliminated overfishing and are rebuilding overfished stocks to sustainable levels in all federally managed fisheries.

[4] MRAG and Fisheries Ecosystems Restoration Research, Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, 2008. *The Global Extent of Illegal Fishing.* Available at: http://www.mrag.co.uk/Documents/ExtentGlobalIllegalFishing.pdf.

And, last year, we asked the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) to conduct a policy study of whether the agency's role in seafood certification should go beyond this *status quo*. MAFAC has been seeking input from buyers and sellers of seafood and gathering information from existing certification organizations to see what an appropriate role for NMFS would be. One of the objectives is to collect information from stakeholders who are directly involved in the purchasing of seafood for restaurants, supermarkets, and other retail, food service, and institutions to get their views on certification and the preferred role of the Federal Government. Perspectives span widely so far, ranging from a desire for the Federal government to remain uninvolved to requests for NMFS to regulate the use of "sustainability" in the same or similar way the U.S. Department of Agriculture regulates the term "organic." Different options are being evaluated including the relative benefits and costs, and whether taxpayers or the industry should bear them. The MAFAC report is due next month.

Conclusion

Achieving sustainability in U.S. marine fisheries is a continuous process governed by congressionally defined National Standards. To maintain our role as a world leader in fisheries management, we use the best available science and apply adaptive management strategies subject to public accountability and enforce those strategies. We want to ensure that our fishermen and fishing industries are rewarded for their investment in and commitment to participation in this process. Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the sustainability of U.S. fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.