



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

finding the ways that work

## Cape Cod Can Still Live Up To Its Namesake



Small Boat Fisherman (CCCHFA)

As recently as 2002, fishermen on Cape Cod didn't have much hope for the future of their businesses. Boat owners like Tom Luce and Mark Leach, both from Cape Cod, were figuring they'd have to sell out because their fishing businesses were losing money. Thankfully, a unique partnership helped this not be the case.

Tom and Mark have fished for years from the outer Cape. They own and operate small vessels, less than 40 feet long, and ideally they don't fish more than 30 miles from shore. Tom and Mark leave port before dawn, but they're always home for dinner.

They love being part of a rich, maritime heritage, but they also need to make a living. Over recent years, the amount of fish that hook fishermen can catch each day and the number of days that they can fish (days-at-sea) has been severely limited by regulations that make business less efficient. Also, fisheries management in New England is failing and cod stocks are depleted. So, Tom, Mark and more than 50 other fishermen on Cape Cod decided to do something different and volunteered to end overfishing.

Building on ideas pioneered by Environmental Defense, the fishermen organized through the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association (CCCHFA) and proposed forming a fishing cooperative to fish under a fixed quota and only with hook and line.

This hook-and-line sector allocation allows fishermen to catch a share of the codfish on Georges Bank consistent with their past catch history. The plan enables hook fishermen to manage their allocation of cod at the community level. Hook fishermen will decide how many days they can fish, how much gear they can set and how many fish they can catch each day, while agreeing to stay within a 'total allowable catch' (i.e. agreeing to catch no more cod than government scientists recommend). The sector allocation is a five-year pilot program, and is the culmination of two years of work to institute a community-based management program in New England's groundfishery.



Haddock fisherman (CCCHFA)

Environmental Defense and CCCHFA succeeded in persuading fisheries managers to adopt this program in 2003 and expand it in 2005. This has turned into the ultimate win-win situation. The environment wins because overfishing is ended and scientifically determined quotas are set. The fishermen win because they decide who fishes, and when they fish, in order to maximize profits and safety. Improved conservation, simpler regulations and economic stability have all resulted from this fishing cooperative.



Marketed as "day boat cod" the Coop's catch can fetch a premium in high-end restaurants and fish markets. (Chef Chris Douglass, Icarus Restaurant)

Clearly, the momentum toward sustainable fisheries in New England is growing. Not only are Tom and Mark making a living under this plan, but other fishermen are also looking to transition into this fishing cooperative. They want to switch to hook and line, so they can be part of this success story.



Hook Fisherman preparing his catch with crated fishing lines in background (Seaweb)

Additionally, fishermen in other fisheries are interested in developing their own cooperatives. Herring, red crab, scallop and other groundfish fishermen are seeing the benefits of the Cape Cod cooperative. Many of them have proposals in development, including groundfish gillnetters in Cape Cod. CCCHFA and Environmental Defense will continue to actively support fishermen moving in this positive direction. The future of New

England's fisheries depends on this kind of innovative approach.

**For more information contact Sally McGee 860-572-0190 and visit [www.oceansalive.org](http://www.oceansalive.org)**