

“Environmental Defense Fund looks for solutions rather than pointing fingers and placing blame.”

Rodney Avila

New England fishery council member



OCEANS



WHY WE WORK ON OCEANS

“If we protect critical habitats and offer fishermen a financial stake in the health of fisheries, we can reverse the decline of the oceans and revive coastal communities.”



Diane Regas
VP Oceans

EDF MILESTONES

1970

EDF efforts bring all hunted whales onto the U.S. endangered species list.

2000

Our Seafood Selector gives millions of Americans information on healthy and ocean-friendly seafood choices.

2003

EDF helps end a Congressional moratorium on market-based catch share methods to protect fisheries.

2006

EDF and allies win national monument status for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, creating what at the time is the largest protected area on Earth.

2007

In the Gulf of Mexico, we help develop a catch-share program for red snapper that becomes a model for fisheries nationwide.



‘CATCH SHARES’ OFFER NEW HOPE FOR AMERICA’S FISHERIES

The old style of fisheries management—using tactics like ever-shorter fishing seasons—has failed to end overfishing and led to a perilous race for fish. A new approach called “catch shares” offers a solution.

In the 1940s, Monterey, CA, processed more than four million pounds of sardines a day, earning a reputation as “sardine capital of the world.” Today, the canneries made famous by John Steinbeck’s *Cannery Row* have been replaced by art galleries and T-shirt shops.

All along the West Coast, the once thriving fishing industry has been facing hard times. But change is coming. A management program for the West Coast’s largest fishery—the 90 bottom-dwelling species collectively known as groundfish—will take effect on January 1, 2011, culminating seven years of work by EDF.

Under the old regulations, the West Coast groundfish catch had plunged 70% over two decades, and in 2000, the government declared the fishery a disaster. “What we were doing wasn’t good for the resource and it wasn’t good for us,” says fourth-generation fisherman John Pennisi.

EDF proposed a different approach. Under catch shares, each trawler is assigned a percentage of the scientifically determined total allowable annual catch. No longer racing against the clock, captains can fish when it’s safe and when market prices are higher. They also can be more selective, avoiding unwanted species that are usually discarded.

“EDF won my trust and cooperation because they understand that sustainability is not just about conserving fish, it’s

about families who have been fishing for generations,” says Geoff Bettencourt, a boat owner at Half Moon Bay.

The plan calls for observers on boats, eliminating the lack of enforcement that has long plagued fisheries. Says project director Johanna Thomas: “For the first time, fishermen will be held truly accountable for the number of fish they catch.”

The momentum for catch shares rose with the success of our red snapper program in the Gulf of Mexico, which cut the accidental killing of fish 70% and improved fishery health. New England implemented a similar program this year.

“As a fishery recovers,” Thomas explains, “each catch share becomes more valuable, giving fishermen a stake in the long-term health of the system.” The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is now urging every U.S. fishery to consider adopting catch shares.

VIDEO See fishermen talk about catch shares at edf.org/cs

“Without EDF, I don’t think the fishing community would have learned about the science and economics of this great idea.”

Brian Mose
Trawl fisherman, British Columbia

TURNING THE TIDE



All around North America, EDF is working to revive troubled fisheries by giving fishermen incentives to conserve the resource.

EXPANDING CATCH SHARES INTERNATIONALLY

Overfishing is a global problem, so international engagement is essential. In 2010, EDF expanded its work in the hemisphere.

Together with Mexican officials and fishermen and the World Wildlife Fund, we launched a catch-share program, focusing first on the artisanal shrimp fishery in the Gulf of California.

The Gulf supplies more than half of Mexico's seafood, but is over-exploited and threatened by destructive fishing practices. Under our pilot program, illegal fishing is down, prompting the Mexican government to consider the use of catch shares nationwide.

In Belize, we laid the groundwork for a catch-share program for the declining spiny lobster. This will reduce pressure on the Mesoamerican reef, the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere.

We also reached agreement with officials in the United States, Mexico and Cuba on a tri-national collaboration to rebuild shark populations in the Gulf of Mexico, where large shark species, including tigers and hammerheads, have declined by 90%. It's the first such program anywhere in the world.

"Collectively, these efforts will help ensure that the region's fisheries can sustain each other and remain vital," says regional director Scott Edwards.

60% increase for red snapper in the Gulf under catch shares



OCEANS GOALS

EDF seeks to protect ocean ecosystems by creating sustainable, healthy fisheries.

- Make catch shares the standard in U.S. fisheries
- Promote catch shares internationally
- Protect and restore ocean habitats

BIRTH OF AN OCEAN REFUGE

Off America's Southeast coast, ancient deepwater corals tower like giant cathedrals. Stretching from North Carolina to Florida, the vast undersea reef is an important nursery for fisheries.

"This may be the world's largest deep-coral ecosystem," says our chief Oceans scientist Dr. Doug Rader, who has long worked to protect the reef. This year, the federal government gave final approval for a plan to protect the unique reef, parts of which are more than one million years old.

A string of five marine protected areas has been created encompassing 23,000 square miles, an area the size of West Virginia. The reef harbors a trove of biodiversity, including many species new to science. One such species, the *Paramunna raderi*, is named after Rader.