Harvesters/GMRI Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Conference a Notable Success

Great opportunity to share perspectives from around the nation

It was our privilege to co-host, with Gulf of Maine Research Institute, a workshop focused on Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM), in La Jolla, CA. The value of bringing together NOAA scientists, fishery management council members and seafood harvesters from around the country can hardly be overstated, and we deeply appreciate the work of GMRI’s Alexa Dayton and her team in pulling together the June event.

Knowledge and implementation of EBFM is well advanced in some fishery management regions, less so in others. As we heard again and again in La Jolla, cross-regional communication and collaboration is beneficial to all fisheries stakeholders, especially in times of rapid change, and the Harvesters are well positioned to bring people together in order to “de-silo” and share their expertise.

We very much appreciate NOAA presenters Jason Link, Mandy Karnauskas, Karen Abrams, Kristen Koch, Jefferson Hinke, Kevin Piner, John Wiedenmann, Dan Holland, and Diana Evans, who brought diverse EBFM perspectives – from national policy and examples of EBFM in action, to stock assessment science, management and economics.

As Alexa Dayton said following the conference, “It was invigorating to see the amazing work being done around the country to incorporate climate, spatial management, economics and fishermen’s perspectives into assessment and decision-making processes.”

Thanks to the Southwest Fisheries Science Center for being generous and gracious hosts, and thanks as well to the Walton Family Foundation for their support of this conference.

Comments from Attendees

“Learning from fishermen in other regions about their experiences and having direct access to frontline scientists is extremely helpful.”

“This makes ecosystem-based fisheries management and the data much more accessible.”

“[It] was very interesting to think about how to characterize humans in the ecosystem, a critical piece of fisheries management.”

“Interesting to hear that we may have much of the data we need; it’s how we derive meaning of the data that requires more focus.”

Harvesters get a lesson in breaking down a 190 lb. tuna for research purposes during a field trip to the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla.
Harvesters Expand Board
New members broaden reach & add expertise

At our annual meeting in October, members voted to expand the board of directors, adding two seats. Rebecca Skinner and Bob Dooley were elected to fill them.

Rebecca is executive director of the Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association, based in Kodiak, AK, where she was born and raised. She has a BA from Dartmouth College, JD and Master of Studies in Environmental Law degrees from Vermont Law School, and an MBA from UNC-Chapel Hill Kenan Flagler Business School. She is extremely active in her community as a member of the Sun’aq Tribe of Kodiak, Vice Chair of the Kodiak Aleutians Regional Advisory Council to the Federal Subsistence Board, and a member of the Kodiak Borough Assembly.

Bob Dooley has been with the Harvesters since our earliest days, first as a founding member in his role as board president of United Catcher Boats, and more recently as an associate member. Bob began fishing at age eleven aboard his uncle’s salmon troller out of Half Moon Bay, CA. His career eventually took him to Alaska where he was active for many years in the pollock fishery. In 2017 National Fisherman Magazine presented Bob with its "Highliner" award, which recognizes men and women who spend as much time giving back to the fishing industry as they do on the water - sometimes more. We’re fortunate that he has been willing to devote so much of that time to the Harvesters.

Leigh Habegger Joins Harvesters

Last May, Leigh Habegger took over the executive director role of the Seafood Harvesters from the transition team of Sydney Cook and Scott Coughlin. Leigh’s predecessor, Kevin Wheeler, now serves as Deputy Chief of Staff at NOAA.

Before joining the Harvesters, Leigh served as Senior Manager of External Affairs for Restore America’s Estuaries. In that role she advocated for policies that conserve our nation’s estuaries and encourage the sustainable use of our natural resources. Prior to that Leigh worked as a lobbyist on fisheries and maritime policy, facilitated work related to highly migratory species, and served as a Knauss Fellow for Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (ME-01) covering oceans, coastal, and fisheries issues.

Welcome New Members

Dock Street Brokers

We want to welcome new associate members Blue Ocean Market of Morehead, NC, Dock Street Brokers of Seattle, WA, Noah Fisheries of Chatham, MA, Scott Hickman of Galveston, TX and Fixed Gear Fisheries LLC of Eastham, MA.

Thanks to all of you for stepping up to support accountable fishing and fisheries management principles.

If you would like to join us as an associate member in support of sustainable U.S. fisheries, please email info@seafoodharvesters.org with "New Member" in the subject line.

Coast Guard Bill a Win for Fishermen
Its passage reflects years of hard work

The Coast Guard Reauthorization Act, signed into law by President Trump in late November, contained provisions that we had been fighting for since our 2014 launch. Even prior to 2014, restrictive rules concerning “incidental discharges” from vessels, coupled with other proposed regulations concerning load and class
Coast Guard cont’d...

certification of vessels, threatened many commercial fishermen’s businesses.

These proposed regulations were misdirected and impractical when applied in the context of commercial fishing. Thanks to leadership from Senators including Dan Sullivan, Maria Cantwell, John Barrasso, Tom Carper, Bill Nelson and John Thune, the bill was significantly improved. Common sense environmental protections for our nation’s waters were preserved while onerous requirements mandating expensive vessel modifications, or EPA permits for hosing off decks, were removed.

In comments to the press following the bill’s passage Leigh Habegger put it this way: “This legislation authorizes our seagoing partners in the Coast Guard to continue their important safety and enforcement work, it provides for the EPA to continue critical scientific research, it maintains strict environmental protections for our waters, and it frees up our members from unwarranted and unreasonable regulations. We are grateful for the hard work of our champions in both the House and Senate.”

Passage of the Coast Guard bill was a victory for common sense, bipartisan lawmaking and for commercial fishermen everywhere.

2018 Annual Meeting

We held our annual meeting in the beautiful fishing community of Half Moon Bay, CA. In addition to regular business, meeting discussions covered a range of topics including our increased presence on Capitol Hill; persistent threats to the Magnuson-Stevens Act; NOAA’s concerted push on aquaculture development; climate impacts on our fisheries; and the potential for federal resiliency grants for fishermen impacted by natural disasters.

What We’re Watching in the 116th Congress

Executive Director Leigh Habegger and chef Renee Erickson, on a visit with Senator Maria Cantwell, discussed the importance of sustainable, plentiful stocks. Leigh is a steady presence on Capitol Hill representing our members.

We monitor events in Congress every day, and every session includes a few surprises. The 116th will be no exception. Here are some things we’re focused on.

• Maintain a strong advocacy presence in support of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and against any measures that would weaken it.
• Engage in the discussion as Congress and the Administration continues to evaluate offshore finfish aquaculture.
• Engage with the Department of Commerce and its sub-agencies in “blue economy” initiatives to ensure that science is at the forefront of policy formulation affecting our nation’s Exclusive Economic Zone.
• Advocate for robust Congressional appropriations for a number of NMFS programs and budget line items.
• Advance technologies such as electronic monitoring for fisheries management where appropriate.
Last summer, Harvesters President Chris Brown was invited to bring an industry voice to Washington, DC, joining a panel moderated by Margaret Spring of the Monterey Bay Aquarium titled “Restoring American Fisheries: The Magnuson-Stevens Act.” Sharing the dais were NOAA’s Alan Risenhoover, Gregory Jeffers of Gortons, Inc., and Monica Goldberg of Environmental Defense Fund.

On that panel and in a meeting the following day with a group of Congressional and committee staff, Chris delivered some straightforward perspectives from his life as a commercial fisherman witnessing the highs and lows of the industry. We thought we’d share a few of them here.

On accountability:
"Accountability is the cornerstone of anything good that has happened in fisheries management in the last ten or fifteen years. Without it we sever our relationship with science, we strand the investment that American taxpayers make into science that guides our fisheries, we waste our dollars."

On electronic monitoring and stock assessments:
"Removing uncertainty (from stock assessments) is our north star. We’ve been doing that with cameras. Last year I measured every fish that we discarded, and provided that information to NOAA before I hit the dock through an electronic reporting system. So they knew every fish that I took out, and in that way we can let our scientists shine…. This country has invested billions of dollars in fisheries research, then we turn around and give them a basket full of crazy numbers and ask them how many fish are in the ocean. That doesn’t work."

On climate change, shifting stocks & resilience:
"Everyone assumes that climate change is a death knell for fishermen. Well, about half the stocks are going to do very poorly and the other half are going to think it’s the greatest thing that ever happened. So we have to be in a position with our permits where we can pursue the offerings of the ocean to produce the best possible result on land. Throwing fish overboard dead is probably the worst imaginable response."

Chris’s testimony was very well received at the MSA panel and in the meeting with Congressional staff. With your support, we will continue to advocate for science-based fisheries through 2019 and beyond
Congratulations to associate member Matt Alward, owner of Bulletproof Nets and purse seine fisherman out of Homer, who took the helm as president of United Fishermen of Alaska in April.

Bob Kehoe, executive director of Harvesters member-org Purse Seine Vessel Owners’ Association, assumed the position of UFA vice president, while newly elected Harvesters board member Rebecca Skinner of Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association joined UFA’s executive committee.

Fishing Vessel Owners’ Association executive director Bob Alverson was recently re-appointed on an interim basis to the International Pacific Halibut Commission, while his organization is continuously active on issues before the North Pacific and Pacific Fishery Management Councils.

Jamie Goen brought a very impressive resume to her position as executive director of Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers, but now she’s official -- see photo from her first crab trip! Crabbers are weathering seafood tariffs amid a downturn in red king crab, while opilio stocks are on the rise.

Associate members Brad Pettinger and Bob Dooley are both now members of the Pacific Fishery Management Council. Heartfelt congrats and thanks to these statesmen of the industry. Midwater Trawlers Cooperative Executive Director Heather Mann is leading a determined effort to convince federal policymakers that the 2003 federal buyback loan that reduced capacity in the West Coast trawl industry was badly mismanaged from the start and should be reconfigured or forgiven.

MJ DeBrosky reports that the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance is leading initiatives to address the graying of the fleet, as well as playing a key part in the current electronic monitoring pilot project that involves 30 vessels in the Northeast multispecies fishery. Electronic monitoring is quickly emerging as an important tool for ensuring accountability in U.S. fisheries.

Our Mission

As domestic harvesters of an American public resource, we recognize and embrace our stewardship responsibility. We strive for accountability in our fisheries, encourage others to do the same, and speak out on issues of common concern that affect the U.S. commercial fishing industry, the stewardship of our public resources and the many millions of Americans who enjoy seafood.

A beautiful “silver bullet” sockeye comes aboard a gillnet boat on the Copper River flats. Our member organization, Cordova District Fishermen United, represents over 900 small, family businesses that operate in this legendary salmon fishing region of Alaska.
Member Organizations

Associate Members

Alaskan Observers, Inc. • Blue Ocean Market • Bulletproof Nets • Coal Point Seafoods • Dock Street Brokers • Bob Dooley • Sydney Cook • Fieldwork Communications • Fish For America USA, Inc. • Fixed Gear Fisheries LLC • Gardner Boat Repair • Scott Hickman • Katie’s Seafood • Marine Safety Reserve • Noah Fisheries • Northern Enterprises Boat Yard • Ocean Marine Insurance Agency • Brad Pettinger • PPCA Fisheries LLC • Puget Sound Hydraulics

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