

- Illegal fishing: FFA members pushed for amendments to conservation and management measures to make sure prosecutions and penalties for illegal vessels are to the satisfaction of the state where the vessel committed the offences (this follows the experience of Tonga in 2008, which argued at WCPFC meeting that a foreign fishing nation's penalties for a vessel found fishing illegally in Tongan waters was not adequate – see [www.youtube.com/pacificislandfish](http://www.youtube.com/pacificislandfish) for details of the case). The issue is to be further discussed at the next meeting of the Technical and Compliance

Committee (TCC) meeting of the WCPFC in 2011. Another FFA proposal to reduce time limits on presentation for vessels for the vessel blacklist was successful (so vessels can be presented 70 days before the TCC).

- Whale sharks, whales, dolphins: FFA and PNA proposals to ban purse-seine setting on whale sharks, whales and dolphins was not approved by other WCPFC members.

<sup>1</sup> The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) include the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. The Nauru Agreement is a subregional agreement on terms and conditions for tuna purse-seine fishing licences in the region.

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## NOAA approves unpopular catch and trade policy for US fisheries

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Source: Food and Water Watch press release (<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/pressreleases/>)

On 4 November 2010, to the dismay and outrage of fishermen and consumer advocates around the country, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officially announced the completion of its new catch shares policy, which encourages the privatization of US fishery resources. Also known as “catch and trade”, these programs have been criticized as having similar problems as the cap and trade effort to reduce air pollution.

At its essence, catch and trade is a means to allow almost complete control of our fisheries by bigger business interests. It divides up the fish in any given region and doles them out as shares to certain companies and individuals based on past fishing history. While this may sound fair, in reality it often forces smaller historic fishermen out of the industry, skews fisheries toward industrial production, and decreases job opportunities and wages for crew, leading to widespread devastation in coastal and fishing communities.

NOAA announced its official policy on catch and trade after having already enacted the programs on the East, West and Gulf coasts, where countless fishing operations are slowly being pushed out of business. The legality of the catch and trade model is being challenged in three major lawsuits, one in each region where new programs have been finalized: California, Massachusetts and Florida.

What NOAA failed to announce publicly is that catch and trade programs were already ruled a human rights

violation in Iceland in 2007, when the UN Human Rights Committee determined that they violated international law and the rights of fishermen by transforming a public resource into individual property.

Unfortunately, NOAA has been establishing catch and trade programs across the nation for some time now, despite global evidence that they often hurt, not help, both fisheries and consumers. The quality of fish often decreases as industrial-scale vessels increasingly dominate the industry. Fish can be crushed through mechanic sorting and by being pulled up in large nets with thousands of other fish. Fish are then processed en masse – sometimes shipped across the world to places with lower food safety standards – for filleting and packaging before they are shipped back to the U.S. for sale.

It is shameful that NOAA is championing private interests rather than doing its job to ensure healthy fish populations, stable fishing communities, and quality seafood for consumers. Recreational and commercial fishermen have spoken out against catch and trade but NOAA refuses to listen, opting instead to push toward consolidation of US fisheries until they become like factory farms on land — large industrial operations that bring profit to a few at the expense of many.

For more information, see Food and Water Watch’s 2010 report “Catch and trade catastrophes: Failures in fishery quota programs” [<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/fish/fair-fish/catch-and-trade-catastrophes/>]