

SEA FACTS

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CATCH SHARE PRINCIPLES: A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES BASED ON WELL DESIGNED MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS.

SUMMARY

The Federal fisheries off the coast of Alaska are widely known as a model for sustainable fisheries management, and Catch Share programs have played an important role in managing for sustainability. The development of these programs has been an evolutionary process spanning more than a decade. Each program has been uniquely tailored to meet specific fishery management goals, but they all share the goal of establishing sustainable fisheries.

Often, programs are developed to end the race for fish and it's attendant risks: over-capitalization, over-fishing and unnecessary risk taking by fleets and individuals that can lead to sinkings, injuries and even death.

While each of these programs was designed with specific goals in mind, each program has also gone through an evolutionary process, with adjustments being made at the fishery management council level to address new or unanticipated management concerns. Alaska's experience with these programs, and the variety of differing conservation, management, economic, and social conditions each program was developed around has led to the conclusion that the design and implementation of Catch Share programs should meet some very basic principles, which are detailed on the next page.



(Above) The Alaska Halibut and Sablefish fisheries were some of the first Catch Share programs in the country, improving safety and market value; (Below) Unalaska/Dutch Harbor is one of many communities in Alaska that are almost entirely dependent on the commercial fisheries.

CATCH SHARE PRINCIPLES: THE GOAL IS SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES.

Principle 1: One size does not fit all. Catch Share programs need to be designed to fit the unique characteristics of the fishery to which the program will be applied. The wide variety of Catch Share programs in Alaska underscores this point.

Principle 2: Catch Share programs must be developed through an open and transparent process accessible to all of the various interests that might be affected by the program. The Regional Fishery Management Council process provides such transparency, and is the best place for such programs to be developed.

Principle 3: Any Catch Share program needs to take into account, and to the extent feasible, address in a fair and equitable manner the interests of the harvesters, processors, and communities directly involved in the fishery. Catch Share programs should consider mechanisms to provide access for entry-level fishermen or other entry level opportunities as may be appropriate for the specific fishery involved recognizing that such opportunities may not be appropriate in all instances. Clearly, each program will be unique and needs to tailor these considerations to meet the specific conditions of the fishery involved. In Alaska, each Catch Share program has specific provisions to address these considerations. Every Catch Share program in Alaska also includes entry level provisions of one form or another.

Principle 4: Catch Share programs should have clear conservation, economic, and social goals and objectives, and include mechanisms to review and adjust the program to improve performance as the program matures. Flexibility will be needed to address unforeseen consequences of initial design or changes in a fishery that may occur over time. However, Catch Share programs also need to provide long term stability to ensure stewardship. Care must be taken with regards to transferability of shares or rights, and measures avoided that might create incentives for participants to pursue short term gain over longer term investment in conservation and economic sustainability.



Monitoring and Research are important elements of any successful Catch Share program.

Principle 5: Catch Share programs need to be managed on scientifically based annual catch limits, including mechanisms to control and reduce bycatch as well as specific measures to prevent overfishing. In Alaska, extensive management measures are in place to address overfishing, bycatch, habitat protection, and ensure risk averse management while maintaining economically robust fisheries. Catch Share programs are an important tool in the management process for augmenting these programs to meet conservation and management goals.

Principle 6: Catch Share programs should have robust monitoring programs including observers, electronic monitoring, Vessel Monitoring Systems, or other independently verifiable mechanisms to monitor target catch and bycatch.

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