

AOS-USA
FISHING COMMITTEE
May 5-8, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana
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1. FISH COUNCIL BANS CALIFORNIA & OREGON COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHING FOR 2009: California and Oregon salmon fishermen will suffer through a second straight year without a salmon season. On 8 April 2009, the federal Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) issued a complete ban on commercial salmon fishing off California and nearly all the Oregon coast for 2009. Those commercial fishermen, environmental groups, and other stakeholder groups met the predictable decision with no objections in attendance at a recent PFMC meeting. The closures were the inevitable result of the widespread collapse of California Central Valley Chinook stocks, which have always been the bread and butter of the ocean fisheries for the two states.

Weeks prior to the Council's official announcement, most salmon stakeholders had already recognized the writing on the wall. The 2008 ban on salmon fishing resulted from a dangerously low return of only 87,881 Chinook salmon in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River system in 2007. In 2008, Chinook salmon returns in Sacramento-San Joaquin River system declined to a record low of 66,286 fish. Last year's numbers fell far short of the council's minimum conservation goal of 122,000 returning salmon. Referencing the inadequate salmon returns, the PFMC did not propose a 2009 commercial salmon season as a potential option in its March 2009 outline.

California fishermen have suffered huge economic losses due to decreasing salmon runs in recent years. In 1978, there were nearly 5,000 active commercial salmon fishing vessels in California and by 2007 the state harbored only 601 active vessels. Nearly 2,263 fishermen or workers in allied industries lost their jobs after 2008's ban on commercial salmon fishing. The total economic losses to fishing communities and fishing-related businesses for 2008 were estimated to be more than \$250 million for California alone. Oregon suffered its own additional losses.

Lack of a commercial salmon season has forced many California and Oregon fishermen to rely on disaster relief funds, while they fight to bring the environmental policy reforms necessary to bring back healthy salmon numbers. Coastal communities that once relied on salmon for a livelihood are dissolving due to the financial stresses imposed by dwindling salmon runs. According to one fishermen present at the PFMC meeting, the "youngest crewmember in my port is 49 years old." Without healthy fish populations, the California and Oregon salmon fishing culture will continue to fade out as fewer and fewer youth are introduced to the profession. Much of the coastal infrastructure necessary for a healthy salmon fishery is also collapsing or close to the breaking point in both states.

The only bright point is that this year's salmon fishery in Washington State, because it is influenced mostly by Columbia River salmon stocks and not those from the California Central Valley, will be more like a normal season than last year, though still somewhat depressed in places.

2. ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, UNREGULATED FISHING AND PIRACY: The European Commission has said it is ready to investigate and take action against any European boats or European-owned fishing companies that fly flags of convenience that engage in illegal fishing off the coast of Somalia. Abdirahman Ibbi, the deputy prime minister and minister of fisheries and marine resources in the new Somali national unity government, said that an estimated 220 foreign-owned vessels were still engaged in unlicensed and illegal fishing in Somali waters, most of them of European origin. Illegal fishing over the last two decades by European boats and European firms that operate boats that fly flags of convenience - when the nationality of the owner is different from the country of registration - as well as the regular

dumping of toxic waste in Somali waters by Swiss and Italian companies has been described by analysts and development and green NGOs as the twin root causes of the current piracy crisis. As global powers ratchet up the naval pressure off the coast of Somalia and the European Union prepares to play host to a major international conference on the growing scourge of piracy, very little attention is being paid to the other 'piracy' in the area - the decades of European illegal fishing and dumping of toxic waste in Somali waters. A 2005 report from the Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG) for the UK government shows that the Somali economy loses an estimated €73 million a year due to illegal fishing. Other estimates put the figure as high as €230 million a year. On an annual basis, anywhere from 700 to more than a thousand boats have fished illegally since 1991 in the country's waters.

It is not only Europe that is responsible: ships from Taiwan, China, South Korea, Thailand, Yemen and Kenya have also engaged in illegal fishing, according to Somali experts, but since 2006, this has declined as it is too risky to get close to the coast. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Zapatero put an end to the practice in the same year, as his government said it could not provide protection. But Somalis did not turn to armed conflict at sea only as a way to combat illegal fishing. This irregular, self-styled coast guard also set out to put an end to widespread use of their waters as essentially an exceedingly cheap landfill, scrap yard, toilet and nuclear storage site all rolled into one by foreign ships that have been dumping industrial, medical and even radioactive waste. As early as 2005, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) warned that the vicious tsunami of the previous December had broken up tonnes of rusting barrels of such waste illegally that had been dumped in the country's waters for years. Nevertheless, while illegal fishing and toxic waste dumping together combine with state failure as the root causes of the piracy, it is important not to romanticize the pirates as some Robin Hoods of the waves, warns Ali Abdulahi, a Somali analyst and CEO of a local management advisory firm, Amsas Consulting. "Somalis have been catapulted into piracy by the illegal fishing and toxic waste dumping," he told EUobserver. "However, there are two types of pirates, the first is a criminal element and the second are the original fishermen who have been displaced by the illegal fishing. But when you combine the two, it is very hard to distinguish one from the other, given the thousands of boats involved. Without solving the root causes of the piracy, it will not go away."

Articles on the piracy:

<http://www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2009/04/24/pirates/index.html>

<http://euobserver.com/13/27983>

<http://euobserver.com/13/27244>

<http://euobserver.com/?aid=27966>

3. JOINT OCEAN COMMISSION INITIATIVE CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ADDRESS OCEAN CONCERNS IN FISHERY, CLIMATE, ENERGY AND ECONOMIC POLICY: On 7 April, I was one of the Commissioners that delivered the report from the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOCI), "Changing Oceans, Changing World: Ocean Priorities for the Administration and Congress." The recommendations incorporate input from leaders at some of the most respected and influential ocean and coastal policy and science organizations in the country.

The report identifies specific actions the Obama Administration and Congress should take within two to four years to improve ocean and coastal policy, management, science and funding, emphasizing their contributions toward addressing pressing national challenges of climate change, energy security and reviving the economy.

The impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, ocean acidification, and increased coastal flooding and erosion accompanying more intense storms threaten private and public infrastructure and ecosystems, decreasing revenue from coastal industries and generating staggering costs for recovery efforts. Economic activity in coastal watershed counties, where well over half the nation's population resides, contributes approximately 68 percent, or \$7.8 trillion, of the nation's GDP. Ocean-dependent industries such as fishing, shipping and offshore energy generate approximately \$138 billion for the United

States each year, which is 2.5 times more than the agriculture industry. These contributions will likely be in jeopardy as climate change impacts along our coasts become more prevalent.

The Joint Initiative's recommendations in "Changing Oceans, Changing World: Ocean Priorities for the Administration and Congress" include specific directives to establish a national ocean policy, strengthen the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, reauthorize the Coastal Zone Management Act, integrate ocean science into broader climate change, energy and economic initiatives, and renew the nation's leadership in international ocean policy. These actions will require increased funding for ocean science, management and education, and would have widespread benefits.

For a full list of the specific recommendations included in the Joint Initiative's "Changing Oceans, Changing World: Ocean Priorities for the Administration and Congress," please visit www.jointoceancommission.org.

4. SALMONAID FESTIVAL; BERKELEY, CA BENEFIT TO FEATURE LIVE MUSIC, AUCTION: From 1900 to 2300 HRS, guests can enjoy live music and a live auction while talking with local fishermen. The event will be held at La Pena Cultural Center in Berkeley, CA. SalmonAid is a place where commercial, recreational and Tribal fishermen, conservation organizations, chefs, restaurants, scientists and more come together to celebrate wild salmon, wild rivers, and healthy communities. The theme of the 2009 SalmonAid, to be held 20 and 21 June, is "Restore Rivers, Recover Salmon, Rebuild Jobs!" Suggested donation for the benefit event is \$25. Visit www.salmonaid.org for more information.

5. COOKING FOR SOLUTIONS GALA IN MONTEREY, CA: On 15 May, the Monterey Bay Aquarium will host the culinary celebration of the year, featuring spectacular gourmet dishes prepared by celebrity chefs and 60 outstanding regional restaurants; organic and sustainable wines from 55 premium West Coast wineries; and a book signing with The French Laundry's Thomas Keller, honored Chef of the Year. A silent auction benefiting the Aquarium's Seafood Watch program will feature outstanding culinary adventures, great wines and many one-of-a-kind items. Admission ticket includes a souvenir wineglass and an event program with recipes from participating chefs. The event goes from 1930 to 2230 HRS and costs \$150 for general public/\$120 Aquarium members. More information is at www.montereybayaquarium.org.

6. AMERICA'S RIVERS AND FISH CONTAMINATED WITH PHARMACEUTICALS: Recent studies released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) have uncovered a new threat to the water quality of U.S. rivers. Pharmaceutical residues that were once in such minute quantities as to be immeasurable by scientist have now been documented in 5 major U.S. rivers. The research of EPA and USGS adds to a growing body of international scientific evidence suggesting that pharmaceuticals are passing through wastewater treatment plants and into river ecosystems.

The two federal studies released by the EPA and USGS focus on the link between upstream pharmaceutical companies and downstream contamination. At one treated sewage outfall location, federal scientists measured the muscle relaxant metaxalone at concentrations hundreds of times higher than the threshold necessary for an environmental impact review of the substance by the EPA. The highest concentrations of dissolved pharmaceuticals are found at wastewater treatment plant intakes that are fed by large drug companies.

Companies such as Pfizer do not test wastewater for potential contaminants before it is conveyed off-site for treatment. Scientists from the EPA examined sewage at a wastewater treatment plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan that receives Pfizer, Inc.'s wastewater. Data recorded by Kalamazoo's Public Services Director showed high concentrations of lincomycin entering the plant, an antibiotic drug that was being manufactured by Pfizer near the time of testing. Kalamazoo's water treatment plant was fortunately able to remove the majority of the lincomycin before it was released into local waterways.

Five rivers in or near Chicago, Dallas, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Orlando that receive large amounts of wastewater discharge from wastewater treatment plants were found to host contaminated fish. These fish were contaminated with a wide range of common medications and chemicals that are used and excreted by local citizens. Among those drugs discovered in fish tissue were the cholesterol drug gemfibrozil, the hypertension medication diltiazem, and the antidepressants Zoloft and Prozac. Previous research has pointed towards the detrimental effects on reproductive behavior that bioaccumulated antidepressants can render to fish.

A 2006 U.S. Census report recorded 1,886 pharmaceutical companies existing in the United States. Despite the obvious environmental and human health threats that ingestion of prescription drugs and chemicals pose, federal agencies such as the EPA have yet to establish acceptable aquatic limits for these compounds. The EPA's most recent sampling of fish and surface water is part of the National Rivers and Stream Assessment that will guide the EPA in further pursuit of this water quality issue.

For a 20 April 2009 story from the Associated Press, go to www.sltrib.com/ci_12182699. For a 26 March story from the U.S. News and World Report, go to http://health.usnews.com/articles/health/healthday/2009/03/26/fish-in-us-rivers-tainted-with-common-medications_print.htm.

7. SENATOR BOXER REINTRODUCES COMPREHENSIVE OCEANS LEGISLATION: U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer reintroduced the National Oceans Protection Act on 22 April, Earth Day 2009. The legislation, first introduced in 2005, outlines a policy to protect the oceans and Great Lakes by promoting research and education and improving coordination and collaboration between, for example, federal agencies, state managers, and local governments.

Senator Boxer said, "Our oceans affect nearly every aspect of our lives—our food, our health, our climate, our economy—but they have become increasingly endangered. This bill [S. 858] provides a comprehensive approach to ocean management that will ensure that Americans can enjoy the beauty and majesty of our oceans for generations to come."

According to the press release from Senator Boxer's office, some of the key components of the bill are the creation of a National Ocean Policy and a Presidential advisory committee to oversee its execution. The bill would also establish "Regional Ocean Partnerships" with broad representation from all levels of government and agencies that would implement the National Ocean Policy. Funding for these entities would come from a postage stamp and from "new or emerging activities in Federal waters," such as wind and wave energy.

8. UN FORMALLY DECLARES 8 JUNE "WORLD OCEANS DAY": World Oceans Day is finally official, 16 years after the idea was originally proposed. Creating a day to celebrate was first suggested at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Museums, aquariums, conservation groups and other organizations have celebrated the day annually ever since then, but it took thousands of emails and petitions to make the designation official. The UN is planning festivities for this summer. For the press release, see <http://www.transworldnews.com/NewsStory.aspx?id=83850&cat=12>.

9. THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL: Has decided to close both the recreational and commercial fisheries for red snapper in federal waters from Florida to North Carolina. The closure would take the form of a 180-day ban, with the option to continue the ban for an additional 6 months if stocks did not rebound sufficiently. The fishing ban must now get approval from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to be enacted. NMFS released a 2008 stock assessment estimating that "the total population of spawning females in the Atlantic has dipped to 375 metric tons — about 3 percent of what's deemed a healthy population," according to an Associated Press report.

The closure could be disastrous for coastal towns whose businesses depend on a robust charter industry. Recreational anglers account for about three quarters of the total red snapper catch in the Atlantic. Many of these recreational fishermen utilize head boats or charter vessels, the operation of which provides the foundation for a major tourist economy. These towns are now left to wonder whether their businesses could survive the ban. The potentially swift implementation of the ban and its indefinite length make budgeting for the closure difficult.

www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hgz_ab0_zXZVvCvdLx7ubRA3KVPwD96NONKG0. For the 8 March Florida Times-Union article, see www.jacksonville.com/jim_sutton/2009-03-07/story/future_of_snapper_an_emotional_topic.

10. U.N. ALLIES WITH GLOBAL SHIPPING COMPANIES TO END ALIEN INVASION: The International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Global Environment Facility (GEF), and four private shipping companies have banded together to form the Global Industry Alliance. According to one estimate, 228 marine species are commonly transported in ballast water or on the exterior of marine vessels from port to port. These foreign stowaways are known as invasive species and they have become an increasing threat to marine ecosystems worldwide.

The IMO has found international agreement on the severity of the problem. In 2008, the IMO put into force an international ruling that shipping industries would treat the outside of their ships for species like barnacles that can attach themselves to ship hulls. Another treaty to tackle the other issue of ballast water must still be ratified by 30 countries before it can be enforced. Although the international ballast water treaty is still pending, the shipping industry is already developing several new technologies to counter the invasive species threat. The use of heat, biodegradable chemicals, electrochemical control, and ballast-free ships are all potential solutions that are currently being tested. Perhaps the most promising of these technologies is the introduction of ballast-free ships. Ships equipped with this ballast system would continuously run seawater through the ship via a massive plumbing system, rather than carry the same water from one port to the next.

For an 11 March 2009 article from the Worldwatch Institute, go to www.worldwatch.org/node/6035. A copy of the IMO treaty on ballast water and invasive species can be found at www.imo.org/Conventions/mainframe.asp?topic_id=867.

11. SCAN A CAN, MEET A FISHERMAN: Oregon State University (OSU), the Community Seafood Initiative and Oregon commercial fisherman have teamed up to create Pacific Fish Trax. With the Pacific Fish Trax pilot project, consumers at the two participating New Seasons Market stores can scan the bar code of specially labeled packages of albacore tuna to see information about the fish, the fisherman who caught the fish, the boat used to catch the tuna, and the processor that packaged it. Once home, the consumer can go online to find even more educational multimedia related to the fish they purchased. The pilot project began on 20 February.

The eventual aim of the project is to more accurately manage fisheries using real-time data collected daily by fishermen and analyzed by fisheries scientists. <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ncs/newsarch/2009/Feb09/fishtrax.html>.

12. DILUTION MAY NOT BE THE SOLUTION FOR FISH FARMS: Until recently, the effects of aquaculture wastes on the seemingly limitless ocean environment were seen as insignificant. Waste flow models employed by aquaculture industry officials and permitting agencies were based on sewage outfall pipes. These waste flow models were ill equipped to accurately model the true dynamics of fish farm waste flow. Data based on these models reinforced the archaic cliché that “the solution to pollution is dilution.”

In response to the inadequacy of current aquaculture waste flow models, Oliver Fringer, an Assistant Professor at Stanford University, has utilized new Stanford software to more accurately model the flow of fish farm waste. Oliver created a mock coastal marine area using the SUNTANS software to demonstrate the multitude of waste flow variables that the software will account for. This software will be applied to geographically specific models to ensure that results are regionally specific. Factors such as cage design, rotation of the earth, and variable currents can all be considered with the new program. Shifting currents could mean the difference between waste dispersal out to sea or countywide beach closures.

The development of the SUNTANS software comes at a crucial moment in aquaculture. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council recently voted to begin permitting offshore aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico. This controversial decision was argued against by many on the grounds that excess fish waste could create more “dead zones” -- areas where there is not enough dissolved oxygen in the water to support plants and animals -- or wind up polluting nearby public beaches. SUNTANS could be a vital tool in future site placement and permitting along the Gulf Coast and worldwide, wherever aquaculture is proposed.

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/greenspace/2009/02/waste-from-fish.html>.
www.imperialvalleynews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4386&Itemid=2.

13. MERCURY TREATY IN THE WORKS: The Ministers of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) met on 16 February in Nairobi, Kenya to begin formulating an international agreement to reduce and regulate global mercury levels. In a reversal of previous policy, the United States is now in support of the development of a legally binding global treaty. The strategy aims to reduce international demand for industrial products that incorporate mercury and processes - such as mercury mining operations - while also seeking to cut atmospheric emissions and clean up programs for contaminated sites.

Because of mercury's ability to travel long distances and remain in the environment for extended periods of time, any one nation's failure to comply with the regulations could have great international impacts. About 120 countries in total have expressed interest in such a legally binding agreement. Most global mercury is emitted from burning coal, some chemical production, and small-scale mining.

Mercury is a neurotoxin that builds up in the air, water, and soil. It is also infamous for bio accumulating in fish, which eat bacteria, plants, and smaller fish already contaminated by mercury and also absorb the chemical through their gills from contaminated water. Fish have evolved to tolerate mercury levels much, much higher than in the surrounding water. In humans, on the other hand, mercury exposure can be lethal, especially for fetuses and young children. High levels of mercury can cause damage to the nervous system, lungs, liver, and kidney. Over 6,000 tons of mercury is released into the environment every year.

<http://news.prnewswire.com/DisplayReleaseContent.aspx?ACCT>

14. AUCTION AT THE PORTLAND, ME FISH EXCHANGE: The auction is now using a computer program for its selling & buying. Instead of raising numbered paddles in the air, seafood buyers place their bids by tapping the space bar on their computer keyboards. With fish catches falling and the region's other seafood auctions in Gloucester, Mass., and New Bedford, Mass., going electronic, the time came for the fish exchange to change its ways. Electronic bidding speeds up the auction and reduces costs. And it's flexible because seafood buyers can be anywhere while bidding.

15. PERFECT STORM HONORS: Capt. Larry Brudnicki commanded the crew of his U.S. Coast Guard ship through two successful rescue missions during the famed "Perfect Storm" of Halloween 1991. Brudnicki, who is being inducted into the U.S. Coast Guard Hall of Heroes, was the commanding officer aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Tamaroa during a rare confluence of storms that conquered a commercial fishing crew and has since captured imaginations as the subject of a book and a Hollywood film. Brudnicki and his crew rescued three people who were clinging to a sinking sailboat off the coast of Nantucket and then went on to save an Air National Guard helicopter rescue crew that ran out of fuel while attempting a mission and crash-landed into the ocean.

16. UNITED STATES FISHERIES ECONOMIC REPORT: U.S. commercial and recreational fishing generated more than \$185 billion in sales and supported more than two million jobs in 2006, according to a new economic report released by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service. The commercial fishing industry-harvesters, seafood processors, seafood wholesalers and seafood retailers-generated \$103 billion in sales, \$44 billion in income and supported 1.5 million jobs in 2006, the most recent year included in the report, *Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2006*, which covers 1997 to 2006. Recreational fishing generated \$82 billion in sales, \$24 billion in income, and supported 534,000 jobs in 2006. The report also breaks down the sales, income and job figures for each coastal state. The highest amount of sales generated by the commercial fishing industry was in California (\$9.8 billion), Florida (\$5.2 billion), Massachusetts (\$4.4 billion), Washington (\$3.8 billion), and Alaska (\$3 billion). The most jobs were generated in California (179,000), Florida (103,000), Massachusetts (83,000), Washington (75,000) and Texas (47,000). Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2006 is available online at: <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/index.html>

17. THE COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN OF AMERICA (CFA) will be meeting in Gloucester, MA May 20-21. Acquiring healthcare for commercial fishermen is the top priority for the organization. <http://www.cfafish.org/>

18. FEDERAL JUDGE REINSTATES FISHING REGULATIONS: A federal judge stepped back from his decision to override National Marine Fisheries Service regulatory policies, reinstating the harsh cutback in fishing effort in the eastern Gulf of Maine that he had suspended in January. U.S. District Judge Edward Harrington granted NMFS' motion to dismiss a civil case brought by the states of Massachusetts and New Hampshire; they argued a 2006 regulatory scheme known as Framework 42 was illegal and too restrictive. Newly appointed NOAA Administrator, Jane Lubchenco, released \$16M to assist the Northeast fishing industry with the transition to management of the fishery by sectors and catch shares.

