

# Some Thoughts On Catch Shares

By  
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- 1) Catch-share programs are not a conservation measure. Other mechanisms, such as total harvest limits, address conservation.
- 2) Catch-share programs are about privatization of a public resource, and are all about economic efficiency - that's why some catch-shares programs were called "rationalization" plans. Economic efficiency models leave out a whole host of values important to coastal communities, such as community stability and strength and stewardship.
- 3) The idea that catch-share programs support environmental stewardship is not accurate. An argument can be made that fishermen working on local boats fishing in waters offshore of their communities have a greater sense of environmental stewardship than hired-hands on a boat owned by a corporation headquartered in a distant city.
- 4) Research has shown that ownership of quota-shares migrate out of coastal communities. ("Catch Shares and Conservation: Exploring Community Sustainability as a Missing Link", Courtney Carothers, University of Alaska, Fairbanks)
- 5) As fishing boats disappear from a small community, associated infrastructure and businesses in the community fold, leaving other boats with no dockside support and spurring those boats to sell their quota shares, thereby supporting even more consolidation in the industry.
- 6) Fishermen are not always free to decide when they will fish under catch-share programs. The seasonal migration of fish and demands of packing and processing facilities are still an influence.
- 7) NC fisherman participate in a variety of fisheries and participation is not static, but is fluid, with fishermen traditionally moving in and out of participation based on weather conditions, local stock abundance, market conditions, and other factors. To base eligibility for the allocation of quota shares on participation in a two- or three- or four-year timeframe, does not accommodate the fluid nature of fishing patterns in NC. It is conceivable that a fisherman, observing apparent low stock populations, may have had the bad fortune to decide not to participate in a fishery in the very years later selected by a council to determine eligibility.

8) NC fishermen do not typically specialize in any one fishery, but land a wide variety of species. Not being a highliner in any particular fishery disadvantages fishermen when federal councils allocate initial shares.

9) An argument can be made that catch-share programs reward the fishermen that fished a species the hardest and may have contributed to the poor health status of the stock, while penalizing the fishermen who redirected their effort to other, healthier species.

10) NC commercial fishing operations are mostly small, family-owned and family-operated businesses that lack access to the capital and resources to compete with larger fishing corporations in the marketplace for buying or leasing catch-shares.

11) Ownership of catch-shares in many fisheries has consolidated and ended up in the hands of a few large corporations, not to "on-the-deck" fishermen actively engaged in fishing. The federal government lacks the resources and commitment to effectively monitor legal mechanisms used to get around ownership caps.

12) Buying or leasing quota shares adds a significant new expense, on top of buying a boat and equipment, for new entrants, such as young crew-members who want to advance in the profession.

13) Food security and access is not addressed by catch-share programs that run counter to the NC initiatives designed to promote more local use of local seafood.

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