Opening Statement
The Honorable Edward J. Markey
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans, and Insular Affairs
Tuesday, July 26, 2011
NOAA's Fishery Science: Is the Lack of Basic Science Costing Jobs?

Thank you, Chairman Fleming. I come from Massachusetts, where, like Louisiana, fishing is embedded into the cultural fabric of our state.

While the financial deficit has been the main focus in Washington lately, this country is also suffering from a fish deficit. There might not be consensus on how to fix the financial deficit but I hope we share the same commitment to using science-based

management to overcome our fish deficit.

Congress first required the Councils to end overfishing and rebuild stocks in 1996 and strengthened that resolve in 2006 when, in a bi-partisan fashion and under the Bush Administration, we reauthorized the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This reauthorization strengthened the role of science in fishery management decision-making and required that fishery management plans adopt annual

catch limits and accountability measures for stocks subject to overfishing.

Rebuilding fisheries can have a substantial impact on local economies and jobs. The National Marine Fisheries Service estimated that if we fully rebuild our stocks, dockside value for commercial fisheries would increase by 54 percent, from $4.1 to $6.3 billion annually. This potential increase could generate an additional $31 billion in sales and support an

additional 500,000 jobs. A recent study also found that in 2009, commercial fishermen in New England, the South Atlantic, and the Gulf of Mexico regions lost $164.2 million and realized only 25 percent of potential revenues because of chronic overfishing. Clearly, rebuilding these fish stocks is critical to creating jobs, supporting local economies, and revitalizing our coastal communities.

Stocks are showing promise in rebuilding by using science-based

annual catch limits. In the past year, three New England stocks were fully rebuilt and revenues have increased. After 15 years of rebuilding efforts, there are now more fish in the sea.

We must continue to ensure that the best available science is used in managing our fisheries to rebuild stocks and get fishermen back on the water. That is why I cosponsored H.R. 2610, the Asset Forfeiture Fund Reform and Distribution Act, which was introduced by my friend and colleague, Congressman Barney

Frank. This bill would eliminate the incentive of NOAA law enforcement to levy fines for its own use and distribute those monies to NOAA for high priority stock assessments and to States for fisheries data collection, research, and monitoring.

Now is not the time to be cutting funding for fisheries science, but that is exactly what the Republican's FY 2012 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill does. In this bill, fisheries research and management is cut 17% below the President's

request, even after Congressman Farr inserted an additional $3 million for cooperative research to leverage the knowledge of fishermen within the scientific process.

Choosing to make these cuts to fisheries science is like a fisherman throwing all his navigation equipment overboard right before a storm. We need not navigate blindly, but can choose to invest in the fisheries science needed to rebuild stocks, fishing jobs, and coastal communities.