

Opening Statement
The Honorable Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Ranking Member
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. Today the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans, and Insular Affairs meets to hear testimony on science-based fisheries management. By the end of this year, the Regional Fishery Management Councils will have put Annual Catch Limits – or ACLs - and Accountability Measures in place to end overfishing and rebuild overfished fish stocks, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

In 1996, after witnessing the decline of important fisheries around the country, Congress first required the Councils to end overfishing and rebuild stocks that had been fished to perilously low levels.

While the Councils implemented numerous rebuilding plans, overfishing continued in many fisheries. In response, the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2006 went a step further and required that fishery management plans adopt ACLs and Accountability Measures for stocks subject to overfishing.

Requiring ACLs was intended not only to prevent overfishing from occurring, but also to drive improvements in fishery data collection and research, to develop a more precise assessment of the amount of fish that can be caught. The Act also included specific provisions to strengthen the role of science in fishery management decision-making. Science-based management is the proven way to end and prevent overfishing, and we must utilize the existing science that is being conducted across the nation by the Regional Fishery Management Councils. Undoubtedly, there will always be uncertainty in managing fisheries, but ignoring the existing data and methods will simply put our fisheries at increased risk of overfishing, resulting in a more difficult and longer recovery.

Protracting this recovery will prevent fishermen and coastal communities from realizing the economic value of rebuilding fish populations, which NOAA estimates to be a \$31 billion dollar increase in annual sales and an additional 500,000 new jobs. The best way to support this recovery is through science-based management, but unfortunately, funding for fisheries research and management in the FY 12 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill is 17% *below* the President's request. Clearly, we must do more now to invest in fisheries science to ensure that fishing opportunities are available for generations to come.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how science-based management is critical to preserving fish, fishing jobs, and coastal communities now and into the future.