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PRESS RELEASE

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MSA REAUTHORIZATION NATIONAL WORKSHOPS: SEATTLE KICKOFF GREAT SUCCESS

SEATTLE — On Tuesday, Feb. 11, the Center for Sustainable Fisheries and National Fisherman magazine kicked off their National MSA Reauthorization tour in Seattle. Representatives from CSF included President and CEO, Brian J. Rothschild, and Chief Operating Officer, Kate Kramer. Jessica Hathaway, Editor-in-Chief, took part in the workshop on behalf of National Fisherman.

Many highly respected fisheries experts represented North Pacific fisheries management, including federal and local public office holders, NOAA representatives, members of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, members of the fishing industry, and marine scientists and attorneys. As attendees filed in and the event became standing room only, the MSA Reauthorization proved to be a key issue for North Pacific fisheries experts.

Hathaway discussed the need to find a balance between conservation and economic needs of fishing communities. She noted that improving on scientific data collection through cooperative research and assessment methods is a necessary step and means to achieve this goal. Fishermen are environmentalists who want healthy resources to pass onto future generations.

Rothschild discussed the scientific reasoning behind the organization's proposed rewritten National Standards. As he explained, the National Standards are the backbone of the MSA and fisheries management. As a result, the standards are a key component to gaining balance and flexibility to fisheries management programs. The interaction among the National Standards must be discussed during this Reauthorization. The House of Representatives' Discussion Draft was also a prominent topic at the workshop.

Attendees inquired about how some proposals may affect the successes the North Pacific has achieved in management, such as minimal stocks that are classified as overfished and thriving economic communities. There was concern about scientific research, the effects of the natural environment and natural mortality on fish stocks, the use of the term "overfishing," and an increase in national dialogue between the councils.

As Mayor Stanley Mack of the Aleutians East recalled, when he moved to Alaska as a young boy in the early 1930s, his father, who was a cod fisherman, woke up one day and found there were no cod to catch. He attributed this to increased natural mortality, not fishing because the fishing gear at the time was not capable of diminishing the stock. If the MSA, as it is written today, was in existence in the 1930s, the cod fishermen would have been said to be “overfishing.” The overfished classification would have been an inaccurate classification. More research into natural mortality, population mobility and identification of the correct cause of a stock decrease is necessary.

A high expectation and standard of transparency and collaboration should be a high priority goal of the MSA. A national dialogue among regions is necessary to ensure best practices are being shared and issues that all regions are having are resolved together. There has been improvement over the last five years, with national SSC and Council meetings, but sharing of information, advances in management, and struggles in management are important and should increase.

CSF and National Fisherman are pleased at the success of the workshop. The workshop was a positive start to a comprehensive national discussion on the MSA Reauthorization among fishing regions. Attendees left the workshop thinking even more strategically than before about the Reauthorization.

CSF is compiling an overview of the meeting, which will be made available to attendees for review, and then posted on CSF’s website for public viewing.

CSF and National Fisherman will also be hosting workshops in Boston, New Orleans and Washington, D.C. CSF and National Fisherman look forward to continuing the conversation across the country in the coming months.

For more information on the National Workshops, including dates and locations, and the documents discussed at the workshop, please visit

CSF’s National Workshop Page: <http://centerforsustainablefisheries.org/national-workshop-series-the-msa-reauthorization/>

or

National Fisherman’s National Workshop Page: <http://www.nationalfisherman.com/magnuson>