



Press Release

Montauk, New York

June 9, 2014

Concerned Citizens of Montauk spearheads Sustainable Fisheries Certification comment letter to NOAA fisheries; gathers signers with membership base representing tens of thousands of supporters.

Concerned Citizens of Montauk (CCOM) spearheaded an effort to offer written comments to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) regarding the viability of establishing a federal label for U.S. fish that would mark them as "sustainably caught in the United States". The certification program, which could potentially be written into the upcoming Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization, would apply to wild seafood from federally managed waters, and then could phase in products from state-managed commercial fisheries and aquaculture facilities.

While CCOM fully agrees with the implementation of a process to systematically document the sustainability of US based aquaculture, and federal and state managed fisheries, CCOM took issue with many of the concepts NOAA offered, and presented suggestions to NOAA for defining sustainable fisheries. Working in collaboration with a small group of people from Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA), and a nationwide ad-hoc group of community-based fisheries advocates who believe that marine conservation and social and economic justice can be achieved through offering truly

sustainable seafood products, a comment letter was drafted, and is attached for your review.

Our modest goal of gaining 50 signatures was blown out of the water when we gathered over 150 signers from across the country who agreed with the content, values, and vision outlined in the comment letter. Those who signed represented a diverse range of stakeholders and included numerous large organizations whose membership base contains tens of thousands of people. There is wide scale commitment to advancing sustainable seafood and the protection of our future and the future of our ocean. CCOM is proud to be a part a growing network who agrees that a transformation of the current seafood system must be implemented to achieve these goals.

CCOM stated that any sustainable seafood certification must include a “triple-bottom-line” set of values, which outlines the social, economic, and environmental effects and benefits of sustainably harvested seafood. A triple-bottom-line approach embraces a broad definition of sustainability that considers the full ‘cost of doing business’, and CCOM urged NOAA to base any ‘sustainable’ seafood certification criteria upon these triple-bottom-line principals, as well as inclusivity of all fishers from the outset, not only those under federal management.

CCOM urged NOAA to offer an inclusive communication process when developing the program, and to focus on traceability throughout the seafood supply chain. We believe that a most critical component to seafood sustainability is transparency and traceability in the seafood supply chain. Traceable seafood may be the first step to a universal definition of sustainable seafood, and CCOM advised NOAA that tracking of seafood through the supply chain could help match price to quality of product, and ensure safe and reliable seafood for the public as well as adding value to the product for the fishers.

The basic tenant of sustainable seafood is to know the fisher and how the seafood was harvested. Being the largest commercial fishing port in the northeast, many fishers call our area home. CCOM envisions a bright future for our community-based fishers through wide scale implementation of our triple-bottom-line core values as the guiding principles for seafood sustainability, and sees the advancement of sustainable seafood as a way to protect the future of our fishing community and the health of the ocean. We hope NOAA agrees.

CCOM is excited to be a leader in ocean conservation and social and economic fisheries sustainability, and looks forward to a bright tomorrow for our fishers and community through a triple-bottom-line approach to sustainable fisheries.

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