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NAMA Newsletter

NORTHWEST ATLANTIC MARINE ALLIANCE

The long road: NAMA and Amendment 13

Where to begin?

“Early on in its development Amendment 13 stopped being about restoring fish stocks and became all about who was going to be left to catch them,” Craig writes in this issue’s message from the coordinating director.

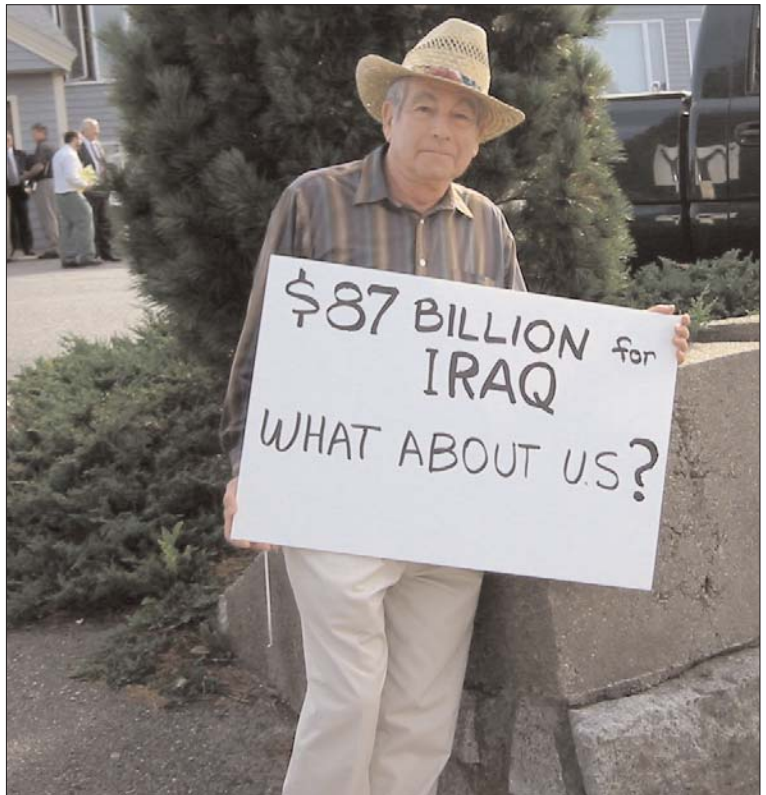
It’s as good a place as any to start a story that goes back at least as far as the Magnusson Act of 1976. And one that is filled with countless and tangled plots, sub-plots, leading characters, supporting characters, climaxes, false climaxes, resolutions, and false resolutions.

For NAMA, perhaps, the Amendment 13 saga officially began with its decision to act as a plaintiff intervener in the *Conservation Law Foundation v. Donald Evans* lawsuit in 2001. In so doing, we gave many fishing communities a seat at the bargaining table for the first time and, as an organization, emerged as an effective voice in the national fisheries management discourse.

Around the same time, we began to create “The Gulf of Maine Inshore Fisheries Stewardship and Conservation Plan,” through the work of our alliances, dozens of fishermen, scientists, economists, and conservationists from across the region. This dynamic area management-based plan represents a combination of the latest scientific information about groundfish habitat, ecology and, importantly, the historical knowledge of fishermen who know the resource best.

The plan was included in the Amendment 13 draft document that came out last February, but was not considered a “stand alone” option for managing the fishery because it did not address offshore resources.

Of course, it was never intended to be a “stand alone” option. Indeed, one of the central arguments for the stewardship plan is that fisheries ought to be managed locally, by people who understand local fish ecology and behavior. Our plan was created by fishermen and scientists with decades of experience in the inshore; we



A fishermen supporter raises a provocative question about our nation’s policy priorities at the Gloucester public hearing in September.

encouraged those with intimate knowledge of the offshore to craft rules that suit the needs of offshore fish stocks and the offshore fleet best.

Nevertheless, the plan's inclusion in Amendment 13 represented a great opportunity to bring area management to the forefront of the New England groundfishery debate.

NAMA seized the moment by implementing a four-part strategic plan that has occupied its staff fully since August: public relations, scientific expertise, conflict resolution, and detailed written and spoken comments submitted to the regional fisheries council.

Robinson Productions

When the stewardship plan was first unveiled back in 2002, NAMA enlisted the services of Mark Robinson, a public relations expert with over 20 years of experience in some of Maine's most high-profile media campaigns to promote it. In early August, Mark joined NAMA again to help ensure that its message was loud and clear leading up to the fishery management council's decision in November.

Immediately, Mark and Michael Crocker, NAMA's communications director, began a region-wide effort to promote the benefits of area management to the public and to policy-makers.

In August, Michael placed an editorial in the *Portland Press Herald* that outlined the disproportionate and devastating effect the proposed rules would have on Maine's inshore fleet. That editorial was followed by a series of press releases that, together, were picked up by over 30 news agencies across New England, including national coverage by the Associated Press.

In October, Craig had an article about how the proposed fishing rules would likely impact the economy of Maine's small coastal communities appear in *Maine Biz*, a regional business magazine, as well as a similar piece in the Center for Rural Development's national newsletter.

In early November, an article with Craig's byline, explaining why area management is necessary and how it works, was disseminated to most of the region's daily and weekly newspapers. Consequently, he was featured in the *Portland Press Herald*, Maine Public Radio, National Public Radio, as well as the channel 13 and 8 television stations in Portland.

Furthermore, each morning of the final hearings in Peabody, Mass., Mark distributed a press advisory by fax alerting reporters to the presence of NAMA staff at the meeting, which led to key coverage again on Maine news television, as well as interactions with the Boston Globe, and Boston public radio.

Portsmouth Meeting

The second phase of the strategy, which coincided with the initiation of the media campaign, was to gather NAMA's alliances to determine just where we all stood on the particulars of the proposed fishing rules.

In August, representatives of the Stonington Fisheries Alliance, the New Hampshire Marine Coalition, IFISH, ProFish, CCCHFA, Paul Howard, Tom Nies, and Chris Kellog of the regional fisheries management



Craig presents NAMA's case at the Portsmouth public hearing.

council, and others convened at the Urban Forestry Center in Portsmouth, N.H.

Thanks to Rollie Barnabie, a generous contribution from UNH/Sea Grant allowed NAMA to bring in Jim Tull, a professional mediator from the Conflict Management Group in Cambridge, Mass., to facilitate the discussions. Over three days, these diverse stakeholders hammered out the details of the plan as it affected their needs and worked to find compromises in places where conflicts arose.

The products of these conversations were put down on paper and provided the basis for NAMA's detailed comments on Amendment 13 later submitted to the council.



Mark Robinson of Robinson Productions with Biddeford's firemen.

In a recent letter to the editor, picked up by several news outlets in Massachusetts, Jim had this to say about the Portsmouth meeting: "I became involved with the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA) as they tackled the fisheries debate head on through a series of highly collaborative meetings involving [numerous stakeholders in the New England groundfishery]. I have worked on similarly divisive fisheries issues elsewhere in the US and Canada, and it is my opinion that NAMA has created a model replicable for environmental conflicts across North America."

Scientific Muscle

The meeting in Portsmouth was also an occasion for Heather Deese, NAMA's new science director, to dive into NAMA's Amendment 13 strategy. Heather was hired part-time in August to help put the stewardship plan into the scientific framework necessary for management. In reality, for her, it has been more than a full-time effort.

Heather holds an M.S. in physical oceanography from the MIT/Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution joint graduate program, and was previously employed by the Oceans Office in Australia, where she helped to create that nation's first regional marine management plan. Craig Pendleton, NAMA's coordinating director, said Deese will help his organization serve the needs of fish and fishermen.

"Heather brings impressive scientific credentials to NAMA. Too often, fishermen's knowledge of the ocean, and the good work they do to protect it, are undervalued or ignored because some policy maker who's never worked a boat has no clue about what actually happens out at sea," Pendleton said. "Heather has a tremendous scientific background, and values the conservation work fishermen do. She has the background and skills to help our contributions get the recognition they deserve."

At the Portsmouth meeting, Heather joined forces with Dr. Jim Wilson, a natural resource economist from the University of Maine and Dr. Les Kaufman, a marine ecologist from Boston University, in the drafting of a "scientists" letter, urging a move toward an area management system that recognizes the behavior and productivity of locally distinct stocks of cod, haddock, flounder, and other groundfish. Such a system, they argued, would help to match "fishing effort with the ocean's potential to sustain it."

The letter was distributed to scientists and economists throughout academic community. And some 86 leading natural and social scientists from around the world endorsed the letter before it was sent back to the New

England Fishery Management Council in October.

The experience provided an excellent base of understanding for NAMA's staff as we moved toward the public hearings schedule in September.

Spoken and Written Comments

NAMA had a highly visible presence at the Amendment 13 public hearings in New England. The organization's remarks were drafted with the help of the entire staff, alliance members, and associates, and evolved as the hearings progressed.

Craig traveled to Hyannis for the first public hearing in Massachusetts and followed the meetings north to Portsmouth, N.H. and Ellsworth, Maine, where Heather and Jim presented the scientific argument for area management. Michael ventured into Gloucester for what turned out to be the most boisterous of the hearings process. And both Craig and Michael made presentations in Portland, Maine.

All along, Craig and Heather worked tirelessly on NAMA's written comments, which addressed the voluminous Amendment 13 draft document on a page-by-page basis. The result was some 20 pages of detailed suggestions dealing with the management of the entire fishery. A few key points throughout was a call for area management in the inshore Gulf of Maine; observer coverage of the highest possible level, at least 10 percent; making zero discards a regionwide goal; closing important habitat in eastern Maine; and real-time data collection.

As is too often the case with fisheries management, the outcome of Amendment 13 left winners and losers. In fact, the reality is probably that the regional council's decision created as many new uncertainties as it did resolutions. Already, conservationists have complained that the plan will do little to improve groundfish rebuilding efforts, and Maine fishermen have voiced concerns that it favors Gloucester and vessels within steaming distance of Georges Bank.

However, NAMA had some key victories. Our stewardship plan was included in the final decision as a "frameworkable item," which means that area management is closer to being a reality in New England than ever before. Additionally, our call for real time data collection was answered, something that NAMA has been pushing for since its founding.

And, as always, our commitment and support of the inshore fishing fleet and their coastal communities remains NAMA's top priority.

Please visit www.namanet.org to view copies of the scientists' letter, as well as our written and public comments.



Heather Deese, NAMA's Science Director



Photo by The Associated Press, John O'Leary, center, of Point Judith, R.I., and Vito Giacalone of Gloucester, Mass., left, who are board members of Northeast Seafood Coalition, listen at a New England Fishery Management Council meeting in Peabody, Mass., on November 6.