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Fishing: Regulate the regulators

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Much of the New England fishing industry is going through the wrenching transition from every-man-for-himself to a system of sharing the region's allowable catch of depleted species. **Making this work will require trust between boat crews and federal fisheries regulators.** Two reports detailing questionable practices by the regulators leave their boss, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration head Jane Lubchenco, no option but to clean house where needed and insist on the highest standards.

New England fishermen have long complained of overzealous enforcement of the complex rules governing allowable catches, and a recent report by the inspector general of the Commerce Department backed them up. The report found that not only are fines more common in this region than elsewhere, but a high percentage were reduced on appeal, suggesting they were likely excessive in the first place.

A second report by the inspector general found that fisheries enforcement officials had used revenues from fines to fund foreign junkets and go on a shopping spree for motor vehicles and boats. The 172-member enforcement office has 202 vehicles and 22 boats, including one that its manufacturer describes as luxurious.

Lubchenco has replaced the head of the enforcement office and issued a directive to tighten operations and ensure accountability. **She has her work cut out for her.**

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