

Between Lubchenco and Damanaki

12 Oct 2011



2011 fishermen's rally in Washington, DC against NOAA's quota systems

On 5 October, Mayor Scott Lang called on President Obama "to replace NOAA Administrator Dr Jane Lubchenco with an individual who will work with fishing communities around the country."

"We need a leader in NOAA who understands that the welfare of communities is a priority and that there can be a balance between economic sustainability and conservation", Mr. Lang, of New Bedford, Massachusetts, America's financially top-producing seaport, said, reports *Menakhem Ben-Yami*.

Mr. Lang's statement followed the hearing of the Senate Oceans Subcommittee, at which Senator John Kerry reminded Ms Lubchenco that the Massachusetts Fisheries Institute reported that "80% of the revenues went to 20% of the boats". Ms Lubchenco, according to several witnesses, answered evasively and with equivocation question after question from the Subcommittee members - three Senators and three Congressmen. Also, she and her deputy for fisheries Mr. Schwaab didn't stay for the whole hearing, missing, among others, the testimony of Professor Brian Rothschild, one of the most respected American fishery scientists and one of the most credible critics of NOAA/NMFS's fisheries management policies.

The hearing was very important, Professor Rothschild told *WF*, because it set the stage for reviewing and modifying the catch share program which has not been working well in the US Northeast.

Ms Lubchenco came to NOAA directly from the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), an NGO financed by large corporations, and made its agenda the US national policy, said Robert Jones, Executive Director of the Southeastern Fisheries Association, and her policies have caused significant pain among fishermen and fishing communities.

Mr. Lang is not the first elected official to conclude that Ms Lubchenco is no longer salvageable - Richard Gaines of the *Gloucester Times* said that all along the New England coast ports have been hemorrhaging jobs while struggling to adapt to her management system, which consolidates resources and capacity in a few of the biggest and best capitalised businesses while dislocating smaller players.

Paul Diodati, director of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries testified that: "It is our conclusion from our case study (jointly with the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's School of Marine Science and Technology (SMAST), that in Sector 10, the catch share system caused significant consolidation of revenues among fewer vessels (80% of the revenues went to 20% of the boats), causing severe economic strain among fishermen, mostly small vessel owners. Even the EDF, the sponsor and supporter of the catch-share policy, had to admit, according to Emilie Litsinger its groundfish project manager that Ms Lubchenco's policy needs amendments to establish "accumulation limits".

Would Maria Damanaki the EU Fisheries Commissioner consider the US experiences while reforming the EU's faulty CFP? The Secretary of Collective Pêche & Development, Alain Le Sann of L'Orient, France, wrote in *Le Marin* that she believes that "the crisis of European fisheries is mainly due to overfishing" and wants to reach the mythical MSY by radically reducing fishing capacity, through ITQs coupled with a restricted TAC. The one-boat owners' selling/leasing their quotas to powerful groups would finance such reduction without public funding. But does such consolidation of Europe's fisheries and the consequent devastation of its small-scale sectors represent Ms Damanaki's objective?