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New Fishing Regulations a Boon for Fish and Industry

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CAPE COD, Mass. - More fish for our future. That's what many scientists and fishermen are saying after last week's landmark decision by the New England Fishery Management Council. After months of debate and public hearings, the council voted overwhelmingly in favor of a new plan that would manage fishery resources by setting catch limits, as opposed to limiting the "days-at-sea" for fishermen. The plan now heads to Washington, D.C., for approval. If it passes, would be implemented in May of 2010.

New England's dwindling fish supply has long been a concern for scientists and fishermen alike, according to Peter Baker of *Pew Environment Group*. He says this new plan is a positive first step.

"The fishing fleet won't be taking more fish out of the ocean each year than the fish stock can re-supply. Eventually, that will lead to our fish stocks rebuilding to sustainable levels, so we can have seafood for future generations."

Under the proposed plan, New England fishermen could choose to join one of 19 community-based harvesting co-ops called "sectors."

Eric Hesse, a long-time fisherman and member of the *Cape Cod Hook Commercial Fishermen's Association*, says the industry has been struggling for many years, with too many fishermen and not enough fish. Although this new plan would be optional, he thinks most fishermen will see the long-term benefits.

"Eventually, I'm hoping, most fishermen who've been at it awhile will participate. It's going to be better for the fishermen and the fish."

More information is available at www.newenglandfishing.org.

Monique Coppola, Public News Service - MA

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