

NOAA National Enforcement Summit

March 2010 – August 2010

Location: Washington, D.C.

Background

The enforcement mandate of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is to promote compliance and deter violations within the commercial fishing industry. In January 2010, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Inspector General issued a report detailing issues that adversely affected NOAA's ability to effectively carry out its regulatory mission. The report pointed out that it is a common fishing industry perception that NOAA's enforcement policies and regulations are too complex and unevenly enforced across the industry. The report called for actions to remedy the tenuous relationships with the fishing industry in the Northeast Region and to avoid potential problems in other regions.

NOAA officials developed a plan for addressing these enforcement issues including development of annual enforcement priorities, utilizing stakeholder input, increasing compliance, and emphasizing partnerships with State and Federal agencies.

On August 3, 2010, NOAA convened the National Enforcement Summit, a gathering of diverse federal, state and industry representatives to share information and provide input to develop a fair enforcement program that achieves results. The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution assisted NOAA in planning for the summit and in selecting a neutral facilitator to assess stakeholder interests and develop an agenda for a collaborative dialogue.

Results and Accomplishments

At the end of the day-long summit, NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco summarized some key themes that could be addressed moving forward:

- Improve enforceability of regulations
- Increase regular and routine contact between NOAA Office of Law Enforcement and regulated communities
- Increase efficiency for administration of violations
- Inform public of NOAA enforcement actions and priorities

NOAA discussed its process for setting enforcement priorities and its plan to use the input from the Enforcement Summit.



Highlights/Innovation

- NOAA used an innovative approach to the policy discussion by directly involving the people and industries most affected by these policies in the development and implementation of the summit plan. Stakeholder representatives included the commercial fishing industry, recreational fishing/vessel industry, environmental NGOs, federal agencies, state and tribal enforcement partners, and NOAA regional staff.
- The summit received the full support of NOAA leadership through the attendance at the summit of Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce and NOAA Administrator; Lois Schiffer, NOAA General Counsel; Eric Schwaab, Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service; and Alan Risenhover, Acting Director of the Office of Law Enforcement.

When asked about the benefits of the summit, one participant stated that it was:
“...a very rare opportunity to have such a diverse group in the same room.”

Credits

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