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TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
Chairman John Fleming
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
On Thursday, April 03, 2014
1324 Longworth House Office Building Legislative Hearing on
H.R. 69, H.R. 2646, and H.R. ____

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PENNY DODGE
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Good afternoon. Today, the Subcommittee will hear testimony on three pieces of legislation – H.R. 69, the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act of 2013, H.R. 2646, the Revitalizing the Economy of Fisheries in the Pacific Act, and a discussion draft of a bill to implement the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing - which is tentatively titled the Pirate Fishing Elimination Act.

Two of these bills deal with the issue of illegal fishing and how the United States can take action to eliminate the U.S. as a destination for illegally caught fish.

These bills would implement measures supporting international efforts to stop not only the illegal fishing activities, but also eliminate the markets for these illegally-caught fish.

It is clear that illegal fishing is a world-wide problem. It is also clear that the U.S. needs to do its part to stop this activity. While I am not aware that there is a significant problem with foreign vessels “poaching” fish in U.S. fisheries, I am aware that illegal fishing in high seas fisheries that U.S. fishermen participate in will affect the market price U.S. fishermen can get for their fish. I am also aware that illegal fishing on stocks in other countries can affect U.S. fisheries. As an example, I understand the illegal fishing of Russian crab has affected the U.S. market for crab and has reduced the price U.S. fishermen have been able to get for the sustainably-managed U.S. crab.

While I support U.S. efforts to stop illegal fishing, as we strive for compliance with international fishing rules, we need to make sure we are not putting an onerous burden on U.S. fishermen, processors, and importers.

In addition, we should take a careful look at laws that are already on the books and determine where additional tools are necessary rather than enacting new laws that may overlap or conflict with existing authorities. I am also interested in hearing more about what species of fish are most likely to be harvested by IUU vessels and what nations appear to be the worst actors. Focusing on the worst nations and on the fisheries which are most

likely to be affected by IUU fishing would seem to be an effective start to addressing this problem.

Finally, this Subcommittee has already held a number of hearings on the requirements of the Lacey Act that require U.S. citizens to know and understand foreign laws and regulations when buying or transporting fish, wildlife, and wood products. I am concerned that legislation before us would magnify that unreasonable burden.

The third bill, H.R. 2646, introduced by our Colleague from Washington State, Mrs. Herrera Beutler, would allow the west coast groundfish fishery to refinance a loan which was taken out to reduce the capacity of the fleet in that fishery. At the time of the loan, the repayment terms were thought to be reasonable and the fleet willingly took on the responsibility; however, the costs of managing the fishery have changed and so have the prevailing interest rates.

As I understand it, after the loan was taken out, changes in the management system for that fishery have imposed new costs on the fishermen including a management fee of 3% on the value of all landings and a requirement that 100% of the vessels in the fishery carry at-sea observers - at a cost of approximately \$450/day. These new fees were imposed in addition to the 5% fee on the value of all landings from the fishery to repay the loan. These new fees in addition to the burden of the loan repayment are threatening the economic viability of some vessels in the fleet.

This legislation would allow the loan to be repaid over a longer time period and would reduce the interest rate to one more in line with today's interest rates. It would not negate the requirement that fishermen repay the loan or reduce the overall loan, but would allow the affected fishermen to afford the increased management costs and repay the loan in a timely manner.

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses on all three of these bills.

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