

# Committee on Resources

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## STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WAYNE GILCHREST

AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS HEARING ON THE INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES: APRIL 29, 2004.

Good morning. I would like to welcome our witnesses.

The United States is a member of many international fish and wildlife conservation and management organizations. The purpose of these international organizations is to ensure that all of the nations which make use of the ocean's resources do so in a sustainable manner.

As we have heard at a number of hearings over the past few years, the United States has been a world leader in conservation activities. We have implemented many conservation measures domestically; however, for those species that span many international boundaries, we cannot do the job alone.

At a recent hearing on Atlantic tuna conservation activities and white marlin recovery efforts, we heard that the United States represents only about five percent of the total world's catch of marlin and the conservation measures that we have enacted domestically could not achieve the rebuilding targets without international cooperation.

Our domestic efforts alone cannot get us to the recovery level that we need for Atlantic marlin species. The United States delegation has continued to push for binding catch limits and trade sanctions against those nations that do not adhere to the international conservation measures. That is not only commendable, but the only way we will achieve conservation for this important fishery.

In addition, the United States has developed new fishing technologies that will reduce turtle bycatch in longline fisheries by up to 95 percent. This was originally tested on the East Coast and is now being used in West Coast fisheries. As we further refine this new gear configuration and see promising results, we are now also encouraging other countries to adopt this new gear to help reduce turtle mortality around the world. This is the type of leadership that we need to continue at all of these international meetings.

The topic of today's hearing is the international aspect of United States fish and wildlife conservation and management activities. This is an opportunity for Members of this Subcommittee to hear more about the challenges that we face in the future at these international meetings and the successes that we have achieved in the recent past.

The United States needs to be an active part of the international conservation and management community and needs to honor its commitments to the international organizations that it is a party to. In addition, we need to continue to lead the world in developing new conservation and management agreements before fishery resources become depleted. It is much easier to allocate and manage a healthy fishery than to try to force cuts on the international fishing fleets that rely on the resource after the resource has dwindled.

I look forward to hearing more about some of the upcoming meetings that the U.S. will be attending including the International Whaling Commission and CITES. I hope we will hear testimony on what issues the administration will be working on in the months leading up to these meetings. I look forward to this Subcommittee, and Congress in general, taking part in the discussions leading up to the final U.S. positions for these meetings. In particular, I look forward to the U.S. hosting the next meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas in New Orleans in November.

I yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Pallone, for any opening statement he may have.

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