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STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DOC HASTINGS
RANKING REPUBLICAN
AT THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS, OCEANS & WILDLIFE
LEGISLATIVE HEARING
July 27, 2010

Madam Chairwoman, I appreciate the Subcommittee holding a hearing on H.R. 3910, the Longline Catcher Processor Subsector Single Fishery Cooperative Act. As you know, I am an original cosponsor of the bill and have pushed for a hearing on this legislation since it was first introduced in October of last year.

This legislation would allow the remaining un-rationalized portion of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish fishery to form a voluntary cooperative if at least 80 percent of the members of the subsector agree to do so.

The formation of a cooperative would allow those vessel owners who wish to participate in the co-op to fish in a safer, more economic manner, and stop the "race for fish" that currently takes place. The co-op would not be mandatory and those vessel owners who do not want to fish as a part of the co-op would be allowed to continue to fish their portion of the quota under the current management rules.

Madam Chairwoman, there are currently 36 vessels fishing primarily for Pacific cod in this subsector. This legislation will allow these vessels to fish in a safer manner, in a manner that will reduce bycatch, and in a manner that will allow for better recovery and utilization of the target fish. These are all worthy goals and this legislation will help this portion of the groundfish fishery to meet these goals. This fishery has already been recognized by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and has been certified by the MSC as sustainable; however, this legislation will help make this fishery even better.

In addition, the legislation will allow the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to maintain its authority over the fishery for conservation and management purposes, will protect the fishing communities of the Gulf of Alaska, and makes it clear that the legislation will not affect the Western Alaska Community Development Quota program.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and thank you, Madam Chairwoman, for holding this hearing.