

Committee on Resources

resources.committee@mail.house.gov

[Home](#) [Press Gallery](#) [Subcommittees](#) [Issues](#) [Legislation](#) [Hearing Archives](#)

Testimony of Roy Todd

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans Having been invited to testify before the subcommittee on June 14, 2004 I would like to submit the following information along with a copy of my testimony.

I was born in Dorchester County in 1947 the son of a seafood packer and have been a resident thereof ever since with the exception of those years of higher education during the late sixties. I graduated from Staunton Military Academy in 1965 and pursued an education in the field of Behavioral Science and Psychology as I attended United Wesleyan College in Allentown Pa., Messiah College in Grantham, Pa., and Salisbury State University here at Salisbury where I met and married my wife of 33 years. For the past 31 years we have made our home in Cambridge, Md. where we have raised our four children now aged 20 through 27. In 1972 I returned to the seafood business operated by my parents in Crocherson, Md. and in 1984 became owner and operator of Bradye P. Todd & Son Inc. a crab and crabmeat processing facility. In 1985 – 86 I designed and built Ocean Odyssey Seafood Delicatessen and Restaurant in Cambridge Md. which also houses a second processing facility. I currently serve on the Board of Directors of the Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association and was recently appointed to the Governors Seafood Marketing Advisory Committee.

Let me provide a scenario with a historic perspective.

When I was a child at the southernmost point in Dorchester County there were 8 – 10 major crabmeat processing plants on the East side of the Hoga River that separated that peninsula from Hoopers Island. Within the past few years that number has been reduced to four with the two largest closing this past year. One of the remaining two has been for sale for two years and has reportedly been sold, for what purpose I do not know. The remaining plant's owner died this spring and an effort to keep it operating is being attempted by his young grandson.

The harbor where our factory sits was once home to dozens of workboats tied to offshore stakes where now only two or three remain. Gone is the pre-dawn roar of boat engines. Gone are the early rising ladies scurrying off to work at the picking houses. Gone are the many neighborhood stores that provided food and supplies to the watermen and their families. What is left are derelict boats littering the shoreline, rusting equipment on the banks, dilapidated factories, and run down houses of people who are beaten and depressed. Add to that the destruction brought by Hurricane Isabelle and you have the straw that has broken the backs of many families that have spent their lives depending on farming the water. How did this happen?

I. Declining Resources from

A. Over harvesting or improper harvesting (but) 1 regulation and conservation efforts have addressed that issue and several species have made a comeback

B. Disease enhanced by natural weather patterns and conditions i.e.

1. lost oyster industry
2. nearly depleted soft clam industry

C. Urban pollution

1. chemical dumping at major industrial sites has been addressed too late
2. urban sprawl and over development of waterfront areas without proper or adequate infrastructure to accommodate waste and storm runoff
3. chemical pollution from agriculture (however)

- a. problem areas are being identified and controls are being applied
- b. continuous monitoring is needed
- c. land conservation efforts are effective

II. Worldwide market stress

- A. Massive influx of imported crabmeat from third world countries.
- B. Inability of U.S. processors to produce competitive priced product with high labor and regulatory costs compared to those of Southeast Asia, China, Indonesia, Venezuela and Mexico.

For the sack of brevity let me say this about the crabbers, tongers, fish trappers, clamers, the crab pickers, oyster shuckers, fish cutters and related seafood processors. We are all farmers too. Our ranches, pastures, and fields are all here on the Delmarva Peninsula with just one small, sometimes forgotten difference. Our farmland is covered by water and what happens to that water directly affects everything we do – have done – or ever hope to do. Please don't forget the " water farmer " since the responsibility for our livelihood depends on the actions and support of the Department of Agriculture just as much as does the land farmer.