

**Testimony of Patten White
Executive Director, Maine Lobstermen's Association**

**U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
Washington, D.C.
November 13, 2001**

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Pat White and I'm a lobsterman from York, Maine. I serve as the Executive Director for the Maine Lobstermen's Association and currently I'm sitting on the on the PEW Ocean Commission and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission among other duties.

The Maine Lobstermen's Association was formed in 1954 on the principals of unity and cooperation. We have monthly meetings along the coast to hear the views of our fishermen as well as producing a monthly newsletter to keep our membership informed.

Every day I spend in a meeting like this is one day that I can't spend doing what I truly love. And that's fishing. Many have asked me why I would voluntarily give this up to do this for more and more meetings and policy debates. And I did it out of concern for the futures of our commercial fishermen and health of our marine ecosystems and the future of my industry.

Pietro Paravano, a commercial fisherman from Half Boon Bay in California, and I represent the interests of commercial fishermen on the Pew Oceans Commission. We also have Mike Hayden, past president of the American Sports Fisherman's Association representing the interests of the sports fishing group.

We do not assume to speak on behalf of all fishermen. We are, however, determined to speak — determined to make sure that this commission hears from the fishermen around the country. Over the past 16 months we have spoken with fishermen from Rockport, Maine to Kodiak, Alaska. Other areas include Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Charleston, Monterey, Hawaii, Baltimore and Seattle, and more to come.

I was skeptical at first about whether an independent group representing such diverse interests could come up with recommendations to fix what was wrong with the Ocean management today, or as I perceived it. However, the alternative was to do nothing, and that wasn't an option for me. I have seen the marine ecosystems that support my industry and fishing communities across the country undergo major changes in the last few years. Over the past year and a half I've been pleased to see that this Commission has been open-minded to the concerns of fishermen. Commissioners value the experiences of professional fishermen and respect our points of view.

We point out that not all news is bad. Some of the important fish stocks are now rebuilding in the Gulf of Maine and elsewhere around the country. And progress must continue. For my part I have really enjoyed the rational and informative discussions at all of our meetings. Having said all that, which is a lot for somebody from Maine — I would like to touch briefly on three issues under review. Protect habitat from the impacts of fishing practices and gear. Monitor and reduce by-catch, address problems in the fisheries management and regulatory system. These actions will require cooperation with fishermen, conservationists, scientists, and government regulators.

Fishermen are also concerned with the effects of pollution and coastal development in the introduced species. It won't be enough just to fix the problems associated with fisheries management. I am hopeful that the work of the Pew Commission combined with your findings will lead to action needed to preserve the future of our commercial fishing industry. The only way this will succeed is with industry, science, conservation and management working together towards a common goal.

At this time I would like to introduce someone who is working hard to bridge the gap between industry and science, Dr. Jane Lubchenco.