



NEWS RELEASE
Sustainable Fisheries Partnership/Oceana

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**Unlikely Alliance Salutes Recognition of Ocean Acidification in
Copenhagen**

***Fishing, conservation leaders join forces to press for strong emissions
policy to protect fish stocks, oceans***

COPENHAGEN—An unlikely alliance of commercial fishing and conservation leaders today welcomed the announcement that ocean acidification—a little-known peril of rising carbon dioxide emissions—will be a major subject of scientific advice for the next round of global negotiations to limit greenhouse gases.

“We were very pleased to hear the emphasis on ocean acidification from Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, the head of the chief scientific advisory body on climate change, in his remarks here,” said Brad Warren, a veteran fishing industry analyst who now directs a program on ocean acidification at the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), a global conservation group that works closely with the industry. Warren was in Copenhagen to inaugurate a joint initiative on acidification by commercial fishing and marine conservation groups that have frequently clashed over marine-resource policies in the past.

“Acidification is the ultimate ‘big tent’ issue for people who care about fisheries and oceans, so it is heartening for all of us to see that the ocean consequences of carbon dioxide emissions are starting to command high-level attention from the chairman of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UN delegates here at the climate talks,” Warren said.

The international marine conservation organization Oceana, which is often at odds with fishing interests, joined forces with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) to support its work with a growing roster of commercial fishermen, seafood firms, and fishing communities that are learning about ocean acidification and, increasingly, pressing governments to take action.

“Oceana and SFP have very different ways of relating to the fishing industry,” said Warren. “But when it comes to acidification, our common goal is bigger than our disagreements. That goal is to ensure that the oceans remain capable of supporting strong fisheries and healthy ecosystems.”

“We recognize that the fishing industry is a crucial voice for the oceans on this issue,” said Dr. Michael Hirshfield, Oceana’s Chief Scientist and Senior Vice President for North America. “SFP is doing something we can’t do, because our relations with the fishing industry are sometimes adversarial.”

Hundreds of fishermen have already called on leaders to take strong action to limit emissions in order to protect marine resources, and at least one veteran Alaska crabber came to Copenhagen to support the global effort to tackle the problem. “We could be facing a question of having resources or having no resources in a very few years if they keep dumping more carbon in the oceans,” said Erling Skaar, a Bering Sea crab fisherman and developer of a highly efficient marine generator system for vessels. “We don’t know the time line, but we don’t want to find out that it’s too late.”

Dr. Pachauri, chairman of the IPCC, highlighted ocean acidification as a serious consequence of CO₂ emissions in his opening remarks in Copenhagen. The problem occurs because carbon dioxide emissions, mainly from tailpipes and smokestacks, mix from the atmosphere into the ocean, creating carbonic acid.

“Since the Industrial Revolution CO₂ emissions have increased acid concentrations in the world’s oceans by nearly 30% on average, and considerably more in some areas,” said Dr. Jeffrey Short, Oceana’s Pacific Science Director. “As a result, many important fishing and aquaculture areas already experience corrosive conditions that at times can kill some calcifying plankton and larval-stage bivalves, such as oysters, within a few days. While some commercial species are directly vulnerable to increased acidity, impacts on marine foodwebs may impact fisheries more broadly.”

Last summer, 70 of the world’s national science academies released a statement of profound concern about ocean acidification, and called on the nations of the world to reduce CO₂ emissions deeply and rapidly to combat it.

“Millions of people around the world depend on the oceans for their livelihood, and billions rely on the oceans for food,” said Warren. “No one has more at stake in this than the seafood industry.”