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FISHFOREVER

A partnership of:



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Coalition Launches Global Initiative to Empower Local Communities to Restore Their Coastal Fisheries and “Fish Forever”

Environmental Defense Fund, Rare and University of California, Santa Barbara aim to feed more people, create income opportunities and build climate resilience

(Washington, DC – Feb. 24) The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Rare, and the Sustainable Fisheries Group at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) today announced a global effort to work with coastal communities and governments to restore their fisheries. Called Fish Forever (www.fishforever.org), this initiative will work to restore small-scale, coastal fisheries for the tens of millions worldwide who rely on fish for food and income. The initiative represents the first comprehensive, locally-led effort to restore small-scale fisheries by empowering communities to improve fisher’s livelihoods, protect coastal habitat and raise fisheries productivity.

Over the next ten years, the Fish Forever partners will employ this approach to demonstrate productive, sustainable and profitable nearshore fisheries in Belize, Brazil, Indonesia, Mozambique, and the Philippines. Success in these countries will demonstrate that Fish Forever is adaptable across differing cultures, geographies and political systems, benefitting millions of people and building momentum to reform nearshore fisheries globally.

The Fish Forever strategy is relatively simple: provide local fishers the skills and incentives necessary to steward healthy oceans. Fishers are granted secure access to their fishing grounds and are directly rewarded when fish populations rebound with the help from nearby no-fishing areas.

“The unmanaged and mismanaged exploitation of coastal fisheries is rapidly becoming both a humanitarian and environmental crisis,” said Brett Jenks, President and Chief Executive Officer of Rare. “Enlisting the self-interest of local fishermen is a sensible solution, and it works – particularly when combined with other successful capacity building approaches. The aim is not to teach a community to fish; it’s to help make sure they can fish forever.”

The practice of assigning fishing rights or secure management privileges to groups or individuals has been successful in protecting fish and fisheries in many countries. This system is commonly known as a TURF-reserve (territorial use rights in fisheries coupled with a marine reserve), although terminology differs depending upon local cultures and laws.

Fish Forever will address urgent needs intertwined amongst food, jobs and conservation. In the developing world, fish aren't just a menu option, or an item to consider purchasing at the grocery store. Billions of people depend on fish as a principal source of animal protein. Small-scale fishers who operate off coastlines are critical to meeting this demand. They catch half the fish in developing countries most of which is consumed by people.¹

Demand continues to increase at the same time that the supply of wild fish is plummeting. An estimated 64 percent of the world's fisheries are overfished.² Compounding this issue is the fact that poor management pushes fishermen to compete for the last fish.

"The urgency of the overfishing challenge necessitates rapid adoption of proven solutions that benefit fish and fishermen alike. Blending cutting edge science with traditional customs will boost fish populations and secure livelihoods. The strategy is replicable, relatively low-cost and empowers communities to lead the way," said Amanda Leland, EDF's Vice President for Oceans.

Each Fish Forever project will incorporate a suite of proven solutions necessary for communities, governments and stakeholders to implement improved management practices and build momentum for wide-scale adoption based on the following techniques:

- **Secure access privileges.** Communities are granted secure access privileges³ to local fishing areas based on legal or traditional tenure systems. Secure access provides incentives for fishers to change practices and reap benefits for being responsible guardians of their natural resource.
- **Fish recovery zones.** Protected areas established inside or near secure access areas that allow fish and coastal habitats to flourish without human pressures. As populations rebound, fish spillover into surrounding fishing areas. Fish recovery zones are sometimes called marine reserves or no-take zones.
- **Monitoring and evaluation.** Building the capacity to study biological impacts and fishery recovery empowers communities to evaluate the results of their efforts and flexibly manage their fishery in the face of new challenges or threats.
- **Local enforcement systems.** Community surveillance and enforcement of the secure access area and fish recovery zones ensures that fishers and their families benefit from

¹ Flyer I-1882 (2008). The UN Food and Agriculture Organization, The World Bank, World Fish Center.

² Costello, Christopher, et al. Status and Solutions for the World's Unassessed Fisheries. (2012). Science, v. 338 no. 6106.

³ <http://catchshares.edf.org/catch-share-basics/turfs>

a well-managed fishery. Increasing enforcement capacity helps reinforce the sense of local ownership and pride.

- **Community support.** Training local leaders using Rare's signature Pride methodology⁴ builds community mobilization and capacity to adopt and adapt Fish Forever. This proven approach accelerates community support and increases the sustainability of Fish Forever by creating local ownership and increasing the capacity to implement and manage fisheries over the long term.
- **Fishery management.** Using information about their fisheries, local fishery managers and leaders will be able to determine appropriate regulations to adaptively manage their fisheries to ensure long-term sustainability.
- **Links to markets.** A secure access system empowers coastal fishers to develop cooperatives, networks and skills to capture additional value from their catch. Examples range from joint investments in technology and infrastructure such as refrigeration and processing equipment, coordination to fish more efficiently, harvesting higher quality products, and creating or tapping into more lucrative markets.
- **Fisheries Policy.** Partners will work to ensure that Fish Forever principles are incorporated into the official coastal management philosophy of national, provincial and local governments, as well as integrated into economic development plans.

"Reforming fisheries management is a proven strategy. It can revitalize the number of fish in the ocean by 50 percent while at the same time increasing fishers catch by up to 40 percent from current levels," said Steve Gaines, of the Sustainable Fisheries Group at the University of California Santa Barbara. "A combination of managed and protected areas can yield major benefits. Well managed fisheries coupled with protected areas can be highly productive."

For example, studies show that well-managed no-take areas boost fish stocks by an average of 446 percent inside the protected area⁵ and 207 percent outside of it. Healthy fisheries and coastal habitats provide additional benefits by enhancing ecosystem resilience and supporting communities' ability to adapt to changing conditions.

You can learn more about Fish Forever online at www.fishforever.org

⁴ Pride campaigns use proven marketing techniques to move the hearts and minds of local communities, accelerating the adoption and increasing the sustainability of the solutions.

⁵ Lester, S. et. al. (2009). Biological effects within no-take zone marine reserves: a global synthesis. Marine Ecology Progress Series. Vol. 284: 22-46;

The Partners:

EDF, Rare and UCSB have a strong track record of testing, developing and replicating key elements of Fish Forever: including: community engagement, rights-based management design, bioeconomic modeling, fisheries science, and policy reform.

About Rare

- Rare inspires change so people and nature thrive. Rare looks for proven conservation solutions and trains local leaders to inspire communities to adopt them and make them their own through its signature Pride campaigns. Pride campaigns use proven marketing techniques to move the hearts and minds of local communities, accelerating the adoption and increasing the sustainability of the solutions. Rare has conducted over 250 Pride campaigns in more than 50 countries, empowering local communities across geographies and cultures to shift from resource users to become natural asset managers. Visit Rare on the Web at www.rare.org.

About Environmental Defense Fund

- EDF is a global leader in transforming fisheries management and driving policy change to ensure that reform is durable. In the United States, EDF helped achieve dramatic fishery recovery by advancing management systems that give fishermen a direct stake in the recovery of fish populations. These programs are proven to ensure the long-term sustainability of fish stocks and maximize the social and economic value of the fishery. EDF is collaborating with fishing communities and local governments in Latin America, the Caribbean and the EU to ensure that sustainable fishing becomes the norm. EDF's Catch Share Design Center has advised fishery management experts from more than 50 countries. Learn more about EDF's oceans work online at <http://www.edf.org/oceans>.
- **About the Sustainable Fisheries Group at the University of California Santa Barbara**
The Sustainable Fisheries Group at UCSB develops innovative science and applies it to real-world challenges to improve the sustainability of marine resources and coastal communities. SFG brings expertise in bioeconomic modeling and fisheries science to help guide the siting, design, and sustainable management of TURF-reserves. This expertise includes developing models for fisheries recovery, designing tools for adaptive fisheries management and data limited fisheries analyses, and providing guidance on monitoring and evaluation. The scientific support and global expertise in bioeconomic modeling and fisheries science SFG provides will enhance the development of long-term sustainable fisheries practices. Learn more online at: <http://sfg.msi.ucsb.edu>.