

**Opening Remarks for the International Collaborative Research Summit**  
**October 1, 2013**

*Peg Parker – Executive Director, Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation*

As Paul stated, I am the Executive Director of the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation based here in southern Rhode Island. For those of you who do not know about the Foundation, we are a small, private, non-profit research foundation founded and directed by members of the commercial fishing industry and those in support businesses. Our main mission is to provide support to teams of scientists and members of the fishing industry working together collaboratively on fisheries research projects important to the industry based in the southern New England region.

On behalf of the Foundation Board of Directors and its staff, I want to extend a warm welcome to all of you. We are excited to begin this 1.5 day summit. Of course the best laid plans do not always go as anticipated. When we planned this summit, we did not anticipate a federal government shut down. The NMFS NEFSC was a partner in planning this summit, spending numbers of hours on that task, and now they cannot be here. But we did get a sense of this storm brewing last week and began to make plans in case a shutdown did occur. The summit will be video-taped, and one speaking slot on the agenda has been adjusted. The sponsoring groups of this summit will re-convene when we can, and the NMFS NEFSC will be briefed. And there is always the chance that this could be resolved today and they will be able to join us tomorrow.

But the Foundation is very excited that all of you have joined us. Some of you have traveled great distances to be here today – from as far away as the Falkland Islands, Norway, and Nova Scotia. We have fishing industry representatives from the Gulf of Mexico and the Chesapeake Bay region, and others from in state and from other states here in the northeast, all representing a wide variety of fishing gear types and fisheries, and fishery related businesses. We have scientists from private and academic institutions, state/regional management agencies, and staff from environmental organizations, all working in the fields of fisheries science and management.

All of you bring to this summit a wealth of experience and expertise. As I look out at you, I realize how diverse a group this is. That diversity is reflective of the organizations that came together to plan and sponsor this summit. It began as a simple idea coming from discussions within the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation. As our work has evolved, improving information for stock assessments has emerged as a top priority. Better, more timely, more accurate, more site specific data is needed to reduce uncertainties in stock assessments, and better understand climate change impacts and changing ecosystem dynamics, and industry involvement is needed. We recognized we needed to look around the world and see how this was being addressed elsewhere. The staff was directed to look into case studies and to develop a plan to bring that information to RI. And the Board voted to re-direct existing funding for this purpose. In the process of developing that plan, this caught the attention of Bill Karp at the

NMFS NEFSC and he agreed this was a good idea and agreed to be part of organizing it. At the same time, in conversations with staff from our local RI and MA offices of The Nature Conservancy, this summit idea was mentioned and they too thought it was a good idea. They offered to help plan and sponsor it. And we reached out to the Walton Family Foundation and they agreed to help with the costs of having members of the fishing industry participate. So a team was formed – and the agenda you have in front of you was the result.

What drew our organizations together was the recognition that good fisheries management is dependent on good information. Accurate, timely, site specific data is needed for reliable stock assessments. Too often the “best available science” simply is not good enough given the impacts of the decisions being made.

Let me conclude by saying I hope each of you learn a lot over the course of this summit. I hope you engage in meaningful and productive discussions, enjoy your conversations over breaks and meals, and most importantly, I hope that each of you leave here inspired - inspired to take what you have learned and what you have heard in discussions and apply it as you move forward in your own work. We hope you stay engaged and good work results from this summit. Again, on behalf of the Foundation’s Board of Directors and staff, welcome and thank you for being here.

*John Torgan – Director of Ocean and Coastal Conservation, The Nature Conservancy Rhode Island*

Welcome to Rhode Island, the beautiful ocean state. Rhode Island is known as a world-class fishery and fishing destination, and we are honored to host such a distinguished group on this important topic. Thanks for coming!

I've worked in conservation in RI now for more than 20 years. I started fishing on Rhode Island's waters at the age of three with my dad, and it remains my passion- one I am lucky enough to share with my own kids today. If I had never fished, never hung around at the docks in Galilee, never worked on boats or at the Co-op, never seen the giant tuna, swordfish, sharks, whales, sea turtles and other incredible marine life in the waters off of Block Island, I'm sure I wouldn't have followed this path.

People who have put in decades on the water fishing can teach us all a lot about what lives out there beneath the surface. I've personally learned more from older fishermen and direct experience than any other sources.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization working to protect the great places on land and water upon which all life depends- not just for the sake of the plants and animals, but for people too.

We work to achieve large-scale conservation results through land and watershed protection, habitat restoration, and through a strong science-based approach that emphasizes regional collaboration and real outcomes in nature.

This summit has been a privilege to plan and develop with our great partners at the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. Together, we believe that the only way to achieve effective management, conservation, and balance in our fisheries is through good science and information, open dialogue, and a spirit of partnership and earned trust.

Our government and system of fisheries management depends on this- that people from different backgrounds and with divergent beliefs can come together around our common goals- having enough fish for the future. That's not happening today in Washington DC.

Many of you share our frustration that our federal partners and sponsors cannot be here today and cannot even participate in a summit they worked so hard to plan. I know they wish they could be here too.

So it's now even more critical that we seize this unique opportunity- to advance good science, to learn from fishermen, environmental groups, states, other nations, and universities in that spirit of collaboration and with a vision for sustainable, healthy fisheries into the future. I hope that we can come away from this with a clearer idea of what's possible- that we can translate these case studies and international success stories into real action right here in Rhode Island and New England. Please make every effort to give your full attention to the discussion portions of the agenda. This is your chance to be heard and make a difference. Thank you.

*Bill Karp – Director, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries*

My agency colleagues and I deeply regret not being able to join you all at the International Collaborative Research Summit this week. We are very pleased with the outstanding agenda that has been prepared for this meeting and had looked forward to sharing our perspectives on cooperative research in the Northeast and learning from all of you about your experiences. My staff at the Science Center and I have been very pleased to have participated in the efforts to bring together such an excellent group of presenters for this Summit and we have every confidence that the work of this group will be a tremendous success.

In the Northeast, we have a long history of bringing together people from the industry and agency to combine efforts for cooperative research. The Science Center is quite proud of the progress that has been achieved to date, and John Hoey had looked forward to personally sharing some success stories from the Center's Northeast Cooperative Research Program. As you will hear from the other presenters, we have accomplished a great deal in the Northeast, and yet we still have much to learn from the collaborative research efforts in other parts of the world. This Summit provides a unique opportunity to examine our achievements in the

Northeast in light of the progress made elsewhere around the world, and while not every experience from fisheries in other countries will automatically be applicable to the specific conditions in the Northeast, there certainly will be valuable lessons from the case studies that will help to fine tune our thinking and improve our process moving forward. We look forward to learning the advice that can be offered from industry, scientists and managers who have made great progress in obtaining industry participation in data collection.

Thank you to the CFRF staff and our colleagues at TNC for bringing together this excellent group of presenters and participants. I wish you all every success in the discussions and look forward to continuing to work with all of you on the next steps that emerge as a result of the productive engagement that will take place over the next two days.