



PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Fishing Community Agrees to Marine Spatial Planning Steps, Honors False Killer Whale and Whale Shark Conservation Efforts

TAIPEI, TAIWAN (10 August 2010) The 5th International Fishers Forum (IFF5) concluded Thursday in Taipei with approximately 300 participants from fishing industries, governments, academia and conservation organizations declaring their support for a 12-point plan of action on marine spatial planning (MSP) and bycatch mitigation. The actions aim to include the fishing industry in ongoing efforts to use MSP to manage human activities and to continue past IFF efforts to reduce unwanted fishery interactions with sea turtles, seabirds, sharks, non-target finfish and marine mammals.

The United Nations defines MSP as “a public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives that are usually specified through a political process.” MSP can be used as a tool to avoid and minimize conflicts, and sustain ecosystem functioning and services, comparable to land-use planning, but in the ocean. According to the IFF5 declaration, the efforts of the fishing and broader seafood industry to initiate or improve coordination with other industries that use and affect marine resources will contribute to successful mitigation of marine pollution, the spread of invasive alien species, climate change and other factors that adversely affect the fishing industry and marine biodiversity.

IFF5 was co-hosted by the Hawaii-based US Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and by the Taiwan Fisheries Agency. The IFF first met a decade ago in New Zealand and subsequently convened in Hawaii, Japan and Costa Rica.

Among the actions agreed to at IFF5 are ensuring that the fishing industry has an equitable voice in decisions on MSP and management, that socioeconomic effects on fishing communities are fully considered in MSP activities and that MSP initiatives incorporate mechanisms for reviewing efficacy and response to changing conditions. The declaration also encourages regional fisheries management organizations to identify areas on the high seas and seabed that are of high relative importance to marine biodiversity. The complete declaration in English and Mandarin with action items—as well as program, abstracts and speakers biographies—can be found on the IFF website at www.fishersforum.net.

At the conclusion of the Forum, an award of recognition was given to Geoff McPherson and Tom Nishida for their ongoing investigation of the behavior of the large dolphin commonly referred to as the false killer whale, particularly the echolocation skills employed by these animals as they forage around longlines. A second award was presented to the Government of Taiwan for its decision to ban the whale shark fishery in 2008.

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