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# *Introduction*

## *Panel 4*

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As we heard yesterday, safety within the commercial fishing industry is a complicated matter. One of the issues that may not be readily apparent as a safety issue are the rules under which fishermen depart operate.

As with any economic adventure, the rules of engagement area very important. Commercial fishing is comprised of mostly small businesses. As small businesses, the industry is especially sensitive to economic issues and uncertainty in any aspect affecting income.

U. S. fisheries are governed by the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. The administrator of those statutes in federal waters is NOAA-Fisheries. Managing fisheries to be sustainable is the 800 pound gorilla within the industry. If just managing the fisheries weren't concern enough, the process of developing fisheries management plans is managed through 8 fisheries management councils. FMCs are made up of a diverse mix of interests, including scientists who identify fish populations on which plans are based and a mixture of governmental and private stakeholders.

Many improvements in safety within the industry have little to do with the training of personnel, the physical condition of the vessel, or the equipment on board. The rules regulating the fishery may have the most important impact on safety because fisheries management plans define the opportunity for success of fishermen. Those plans also define some aspects of risk to the fishing community. If fishing seasons shrink and catch limits are reduced, the opportunities for economic viability of the small businesses are defined. This framework can have a significant impact on the inherent risk that fishermen may face.

What we hope to achieve in this panel discussion is a better understanding of the relationship between safety and fisheries management. In doing so, the goal is to identify new ways to improve safety without adversely affecting the other issues involved in managing the fisheries.

I will now introduce our distinguished panel members.

**Galen Tromble.** Mr. Tromble is Chief of the Domestic Fisheries Division, NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries.

**Dr. Jennifer Lincoln** is from Alaska Pacific Regional Office of NIOSH and many of you heard her presentation yesterday. She is an injury epidemiologist especially conversant in the commercial fishing industry safety issues.

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**Steve Hughes.** Mr. Hughes is President of Natural Resource Consultants in Seattle. He is especially knowledgeable of issues involving fisheries management plans and their development. He has experience as a commercial fisherman.

**CDR Chris Woodley.** CDR Woodley also from Seattle via Alaska. He has been involved in commercial fishing issues in the Pacific Northwest for many years. He has been involved in noteworthy fishing vessel accident investigations and is recognized within the Coast Guard as an expert in fishing vessel safety issues. CDR Woodley was the driving force behind the Alternate Compliance and Safety Agreement for the head and gut fleet in 2005.

**Captain Paul Howard.** Captain Howard is the Executive Director of the New England Fisheries Management Council where he has served for a number of years after a distinguished Coast Guard career.

**Captain Vince O'Shea.** Captain O'Shea also had a distinguished Coast Guard career. He now serves as Executive Director of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. He has experience as a commercial fisherman.

**Geron Bruce.** Mr. Bruce is assistant director for the Division of Commercial Fisheries, with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.