

Caribbean Fishery Management Council  
Scoping Meeting – St Thomas  
May 6, 2009

**STATEMENT FROM DELEGATE DONNA CHRISTENSEN**

I WANT TO REITERATE, ONCE AGAIN, MY SUPPORT FOR THE FISHERMEN OF ST. THOMAS, ST. CROIX, AND ST. JOHN OF THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS. AS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, I AM ALSO VERY MUCH IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE FISHING AND THE PROTECTION OF OUR RESOURCES, INCLUDING OCEANS AND FISHERIES.

I AND MY STAFF HAVE, AND CONTINUE TO ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE IN THE CARIBBEAN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETINGS, AND MEETINGS HELD BY THE FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS ON ST. THOMAS AND ST. CROIX SINCE JANUARY OF 2005 WHEN I FLEW TO PUERTO RICO TO STATE MY SUPPORT OF THE ST. THOMAS FISHERMENS ASSOCIATION'S POSITION AGAINST THE MASSIVE CLOSURES CONTAINED IN THE CARIBBEAN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL'S SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT, AND TO KEEP ABREAST OF THE PROPOSALS AND ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY THE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL.

NOW THAT INSULAR AFFAIRS AND OCEANS AND WILDLIFE ARE TOGETHER IN ONE COMMITTEE, AND I SERVE ON IT, I HAVE MORE OVERSIGHT FOR FISHERIES, ALTHOUGH THE TREND IS TOWARD MORE AND STRICTER CONSERVATION – WHICH IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF WHAT WE NEED.

IT IS ENCOURAGING TO LEARN THAT THE ST. THOMAS FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION HAS SUCCEED IN HAVING MORE OF ITS MEMBERS PLACED ON THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARDS. THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY GIVE THE STFA A STRONGER VOICE IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS.

HOWEVER, THE INEQUITIES BETWEEN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS AND PUERTO RICO AND I INTEND TO REINTRODUCE LEGISLATION IN THE U.S. CONGRESS TO EXTEND

THE USVI TERRITORIAL WATERS 12 MILES SEAWARD SO THAT WE MAY BE MORE COMPETITIVE WITH PUERTO RICO.

THE STFA HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED ITS PILOT STUDY TO DESIGN AN ESCAPE VENT FOR FISH TRAPS THAT ALLOW UNDESIREABLE SPECIES TO ESCAPE FROM THE TRAPS. I WAS NOT PLEASED TO LEARN THAT A PROPOSAL FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM THE COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM TO CONTINUE VENT SIZE DESIGN RESEARCH THAT WOULD TRAP THE DESIREABLE SPECIES WHILE RELEASING THE BYCATCH. THIS DOES NOT SAY MUCH FOR THE NMFS COOPERATIVE EFFORTS. I WOULD LIKE THEM TO RECONSIDER.

I RECOMMEND THAT THE LOCAL LEGISLATURE THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSFERING OVERSIGHT OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SINCE THE FISHERIES ARE A FOOD PRODUCING INDUSTRY.

I LOOK FORWARD TO POSITIVE RESULTS COMING FORTH FROM THE INPUT PRESENTED AT THESE SCOPING METINGS, AND FOR INCREASED LEVELS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN NOAA, THE CARIBBEAN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL, LOCAL AGENCIES, AND THE FISHERS.

AS I HAVE SAID CONTIUOUSLY, THE DATA BEING USED TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAGNUSON-STEVENSON ACT AMENDMENTS IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS HAVE NEVER BEEN DOCUMENTED AS BEING GENERATED FROM VI TERRITORIAL WATERS. THE DATA IS NOT OURS AND WE WILL NOT SUPPORT CHANGES BASED ON DATA THAT IS NOT OURS.

TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE PRIOR CLOSURES IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS, AND PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH WITH OUR FISHERMEN.

FURTHERMORE, THE ONLY SECTOR THAT IS BEING PENALIZED FOR ALL THE DAMAGE TO OUR OCEANS AND OUR FISHERIES ARE THE FISHING COMMUNITY. WHEN ARE WE GOING TO INCREASE LOCAL REGULATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT, ON

LETTING OUR GARBAGE AND SEWAGERUN INTO OUR SEAS? IT IS PAST TIME FOR A COMPREHENSIVE LAND AND WATER USE PLAN AND FOR OUR LEGISLATURE TO ADHERE TO THE EXPERTS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES ON DEVELOPMENT.

NO ONE HAS MORE AT STAKE IN PROTECTING THE FISHERIES AND SEA RESOURCES THAN THOSE WHO DEPEND ON THEM TO MAKE A LIVING – TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR FAMILIES – THE FISHERMEN.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THESE COMMENTS.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna M. Christensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS