

Title: The economics of fisheries conflict

Format: 10 minute Individual presentations followed by panel discussion.

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The governance of fisheries resources that are shared within the waters of coastal states and those that migrate between or straddle different national EEZs is complicated and often contentious. There are the “haves” that have access to a relative abundance of fish, and “have nots” that do not have a relative abundance of stocks and wish to exploit the resources of the haves. The fishing games played between the haves and have nots have been (in)famously described as the “great fish war”.

The games played over contested fisheries are complex. The haves and have nots have sets of attributes (e.g., level of economic development, fisheries management capacity, access to subsidies and foreign aid, presence or absence of fisheries access agreements, domestic and distant water fishing fleet capacity, level of labor force skill, access to processing facilities and markets etc.) that both directly and indirectly impact the ability of the players to influence these games. Moreover, changes in the abundance, distribution and age structure of fish stocks due to harvest exploitation, climate variability and climate change and the interaction of these pressure and stock responses to them, can change haves into have-nots and have nots into haves almost overnight. Players in this game have different objectives and thus incentives and disincentives to collaborate over the governance of shared governance of domestic and international fisheries. This impacts the likelihood of stable, successful coalitions of fishers and states managing contested fisheries, and can have significant consequences for the health, sustainability and profitability of shared fish stocks.

The stakes over fisheries conflict are high. The upside for cooperatively governed local and international fisheries are sustainable and profitable fisheries, healthy marine ecosystem, food security and prosperity for fishing dependent communities. The downside is overfished and collapsed fish stocks, decimated marine ecosystems and the squandering of the natural, financial and social capital needed to meet the food security needs of some nine billion people by 2050.

Our special session explores the economic antecedents and implications of fisheries conflict at local, regional and international scales. We propose a maximum of five presentation, each of no more than 10 minutes, followed by a panel discussion and interaction with session attendees. Our objective is to use the special session as a springboard to a manuscript for publication in Marine Resource Economics or other high impact journal.