

Graduate Award for Research and Training: Project Summary

Name: Stephanie Stefanski, PhD student, 3rd year

Program: University Program of Environmental Policy, Nicholas School of the Environment

Title: The New Fisheries Catch Shares Program in Argentina: Balancing Efficiency and Equity Objectives in Rights-Based Management Systems

Conference: North American Association of Fisheries Economists Forum

Location: La Paz, Baja California, Mexico

Date: March 20 – 25, 2017

Summary of Conference Event

The North American Association of Fisheries Economists is an international group of government, industry, and academic practitioners in the fields of fisheries management and economics. The Forum meets every two years to facilitate communication between these practitioners and seek policy solutions and useful applications of fisheries economic research to fisheries management and industry.

This year, the conference was held in La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico on March 20-25 and was hosted by a consortium of local universities, including the Universidad Autonoma de Baja California Sur. The theme for this year's forum was: "The Economics of Aquaculture, Fisheries, and Seafood Trade: Managing the Socio-Ecology of Sustainable Marine Resource Use."

The conference brought together the leading researchers in the subfield of marine resource economics, including the widely published Dr. Gordon Munro and Dr. Ragnar Arnason, who gave the keynote speeches. During coffee breaks and evening networking events, these researchers and others actively engaged with students and fellow researchers alike, exchanging research ideas, offering career advice, and telling stories from the field.

Within the overarching theme, I attended several conference sessions on presentations directly relevant to my dissertation topic and development, specifically sessions on Rights-Based Management, Economic Efficiency and Measurement and the Evaluation of Catch Share Performance. During these sessions, I learned about fisheries management programs, and data challenges, similar to my own research in Argentina. This led to new ideas for my dissertation research questions and methodologies, and further areas for exploration.

On the last day of the conference, I presented preliminary dissertation research in a special session on "Designing rights-based management systems to achieve social objectives in fisheries." The special session convened a panel of experts to discuss rights-based management systems in different countries and states, including Alaska, California, Mexico, Chile, and my presentation on Argentina. My presentation was well-attended by the leading researchers in my field, including Dr. R. Arnason, Dr. C. Costello, Dr. J. Wilen, Dr. J. Sanchirico, and Dr. J. Abbott. Each of them asked specific questions about my research and preliminary results, which I addressed in a thorough manner while also taking note of further areas to explore in my dataset. After everyone in my special session presented, we all sat at the front of the room and discussed compliance, social, economic, and ecological issues in rights-based management in each of our case studies.

This allowed us to share expertise across countries and find areas of common ground relevant to these topics and fisheries management, especially in remote and developing fishery communities.

Overall, I received very positive feedback on my presentation and preliminary research. Multiple researchers and conference attendees congratulated me on my work and shared that they are looking forward to more developed results at future conferences. The conference provided an invaluable networking opportunity and allowed me to share and get feedback on my dissertation at the early stages in research. It was an inspiring event and will help motivate me as I work towards writing and defending my dissertation proposal defense in May.