

**Marine Policy Seminar
MAST 873-010**

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February 17, 2005**

**Fisherman's Cognition:
Shaping Interactions in the Fishery Management Process**

Fisheries management has traditionally concentrated on understanding the biological and economic impacts of management initiatives. Recent efforts to understand the social impacts of management regimes have narrowly focused on describing the importance of fishing to coastal communities and the affects of management measures on these communities. Although many studies have described the dependence of coastal communities on fishing, very few have explored how fishermen's cognition – how fishermen think about and perceive fisheries and the fisheries management process – affects the fisheries management process.

This thesis describes the perspectives held by the four principal stakeholder groups involved in near-shore fisheries in New York regarding fishing and the fisheries management process. Using anthropological techniques, the underlying cognitive motivations (values, beliefs, mental models, and other cognitive constructs) used by these groups are identified and analyzed in an effort to more fully investigate how stakeholder groups understand, interpret, and accept fisheries management decisions. In addition, this thesis examines how stakeholders, as fishermen and managers, relate to the management system and to each other.

Understanding stakeholder perspectives and their underlying cognitive motivations will provide insight into the rationale behind their behavior toward other stakeholder groups and the management process itself. Comparing the perspectives of individual stakeholder groups will help identify and highlight shared and opposing perceptions of management issues. This information can be used to better understand these groups and to minimize and rectify potential misunderstandings and sources of conflict. This, in turn, will help identify alternative perspectives that may contribute toward addressing some of the practical management problems facing fisheries management today.

This presentation will highlight analysis conducted to date and preliminary findings describing the cognitive characteristics held by stakeholder groups involved in near-shore fisheries in New York. This discussion will focus on shared perceptions and the degree of agreement among stakeholder groups. In addition, significant findings will be emphasized along with the practical applications of these findings in the fishery management process.