

## Convincing Corporate Giants to Care about the Future of Fish: An Interview with Jim Cannon, CEO of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership



Jim Cannon assessing an on-board computer and vessel monitoring system (VMS) in the fishing port of Stornoaway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland

*"TCI allowed me to really focus on the strategic aspect of the work and not worry about dealing with the finances and compliance aspects of being a 501c(3)."*

-Jim Cannon, CEO of SFP

### **What does Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) do?**

We protect the marine environment, which helps secure seafood jobs and food security. We see the seafood industry as critical partners in improving fisheries, and we work with major retailers and restaurant companies to develop and implement sustainable seafood sourcing strategies.

Our structured approach takes the overwhelming issue of reversing overfishing, and breaks it down into achievable, measurable actions that industry can take. SFP's Fishery and Aquaculture Improvement Projects help convene suppliers and producers together to agree on and implement improvement action plans. We created Fishsource.org, a web-based information system, to provide technical information that retailers and restaurants can use to judge the sustainability of a fishery, and to review the progress and status of fisheries improvement projects. This creates incentives for suppliers to make real changes.

### **How did SFP get started?**

I was working to help McDonald's and WalMart source their seafood more sustainably, and realized that there was no way for these companies to quickly and easily gauge the sustainability of individual fisheries, or measure whether or not improvements were really being made. I founded SFP to meet this need and to bridge the gap between the efforts of NGOs to protect marine environments and companies to source sustainably.

We launched in 2006 with a seed grant from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation and infrastructure support from our fiscal sponsor, the Trust for Conservation Innovation. We now have \$4

million in funding with over 50 staff working on projects in over 15 countries, and recently spun off to become an independent 501c(3).

**What was your biggest challenge in getting SFP off the ground?**

Persuading seafood buyers that they can have an impact. Trying to engage in improving a fishery was very different work for big restaurants and retailers – a lot of our efforts in the beginning went into proof of concept.

**How has TCI helped SFP get to where you are today?**

TCI allowed me to really focus on the strategic aspect of the work and not worry about dealing with the finances and compliance aspects of being a 501c(3). It allowed me to deliver on the mission of the organization, especially in the early days. It's been a joy to work with Carin and Robin –they have always been responsive and helpful, with rapid responses to questions.

**What is the hardest part about your job?**

We are relatively unique in that we work with a broad range of many different kinds of audiences and entities, from WalMart to small local NGOs and fishermen. The types of arguments and language that these groups understand is very different – the challenge is to communicate to all of these audiences in language that they understand.

**What is your proudest accomplishment at SFP?**

My proudest achievement was coming up with the Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) concept and seeing many other institutions adopt it, such that it is now mainstream.

**What do you love about your job?**

Personal interactions with sustainability leaders in the seafood industry. Their core business is to catch and sell fish, but they are very inspiring as far as the efforts and energy and innovation they bring to sustainability.

**What is next for SFP?**

Expanding the program: as more players join the game, our success and the preservation of a worldwide, sustainable seafood supply will increase exponentially.