One thing I’ve learned from my lifetime studying marine ecosystems is that they are resilient. The ocean, when it’s given half a chance before it’s too late, has the capacity to adapt, regenerate, and return to health. America is a resilient nation. And the fishermen I have had the privilege to know – are among the most resilient members of our country.

And the hard truth is that they’ve needed to be. I’m not just talking about resilience in the face of a storm on the open ocean. I’m talking about resilience in the face of seeing everything you’ve worked for – as a fisherman, dependent on a healthy ocean – come crashing down.

- I can only imagine how our Oregon Champion Brad Pettinger must have felt, back in 2000, when after years of failing management, the Pacific groundfish fishery was declared a federal disaster.
- Or how Jason Delacruz must have felt with Gulf red snapper stocks at just a fraction of healthy levels.

But there was absolutely no way they were going to give up. And given half a chance, by the emergence of new ideas about how we can better manage our fisheries, they gave everything they had to move forward the changes that needed to be made.

- Chris Brown didn’t just complain when he saw people in power making decisions he didn’t like; he helped organize a mighty band of fellow fishermen from around the country under a national umbrella to put things right.
- Bun Lai didn’t just accept the rising tide of invasive species, he set about putting them to delicious use.

Indeed, each of today's Champions of Change has excelled at innovation, a willingness to adapt to change, and bold leadership, despite adversity. They give us profound hope for the future of our ocean. Make no mistake, we know that when we manage fisheries for the benefit of both fishermen and the resource, it can truly be a win-win outcome.

The dramatic turnaround of U.S. fisheries is perhaps the greatest unappreciated environmental success story of the decade. The fraction of overfished stocks has been slashed by a third. Even more impressive, there has been a nearly 10-fold increase in the number of recovered stocks during this administration.

We should be forever grateful to the fishermen, chefs, advocates, scientists, and many others, who’ve valiantly made it happen, despite all the hurdles. But most of all, congratulations to our resilient and exemplary Champions of Change for Sustainable Seafood!