

Successes in Conservation and Management of U.S. Fisheries

By *Reed Blauer*

In an era when many fishery stocks around the world are declining, significant improvements are occurring in the United States. Examples of management successes include sea scallops in the Northwest Atlantic and salmon in Alaska.

Rebuilding the Sea Scallop Harvest

Since 1983, the U.S. Northwest Atlantic sea scallop fishery has been regulated to prevent the over-fishing of earlier years.

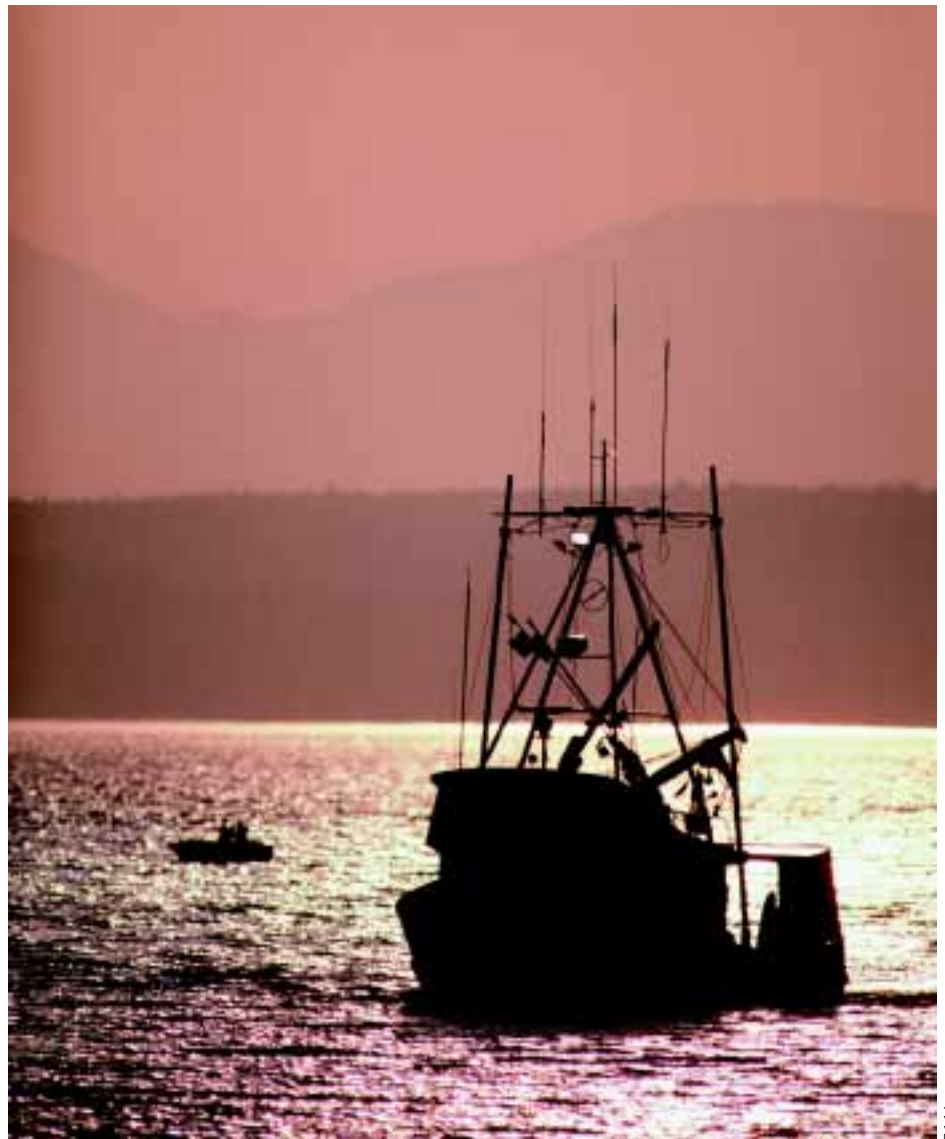
The Northwest Atlantic sea scallop fishery is one of the most valuable in the United States. Prior to regulations restricting the catch from 1994 to 1998, the landed value of sea scallops often ranked in the top six or seven U.S. seafood species.

In 1994, the New England Fishery Management Council began limiting the number of days at sea per year, crew size, gear size and configuration, and imposed reporting requirements. Several fishing areas were also closed to help restore stocks of sea scallops and other fish.

In 1998, U.S. sea scallop landings totaled 5,879 metric tons. In 1999, when the industry was able to reopen one fishing area, the catch rose 75 percent to 10,318 tons. By 2001, landings had increased to 21,300 tons.

Restoring Alaska Salmon Stocks

For decades, Alaskan authorities have been committed to rebuilding healthy salmon stocks. Effective management and a state constitution that mandates sustainable use of renewable resources have helped make this goal a reality.



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When salmon runs are abundant, managers allow increased harvesting. When salmon runs are poor, fisheries are closed to allow populations to recover. Biologists monitor returning salmon using various methods, such as aerial surveys, sonar and fishermen's observations.

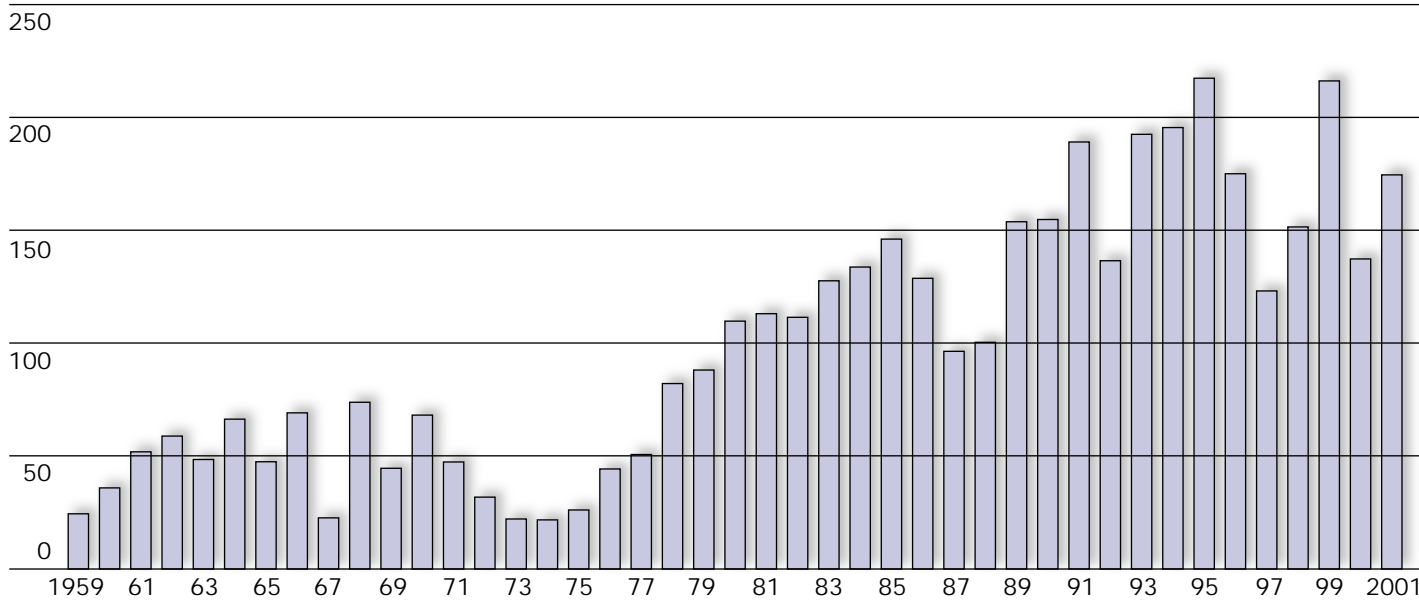
The Alaska salmon harvest was about 25 million fish in 1959 and, despite year-to-year fluctuations, has basically trended

upward in the past four decades. In 1999, Alaska's harvest was 214 million salmon, the second largest in the state's history.

In 2000, Alaska attained Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for its salmon industry. Alaska salmon now bear the MSC label. The label assures consumers that Alaska salmon is sustainably harvested, and has become an important sales tool throughout the world. In 2001, Alaska

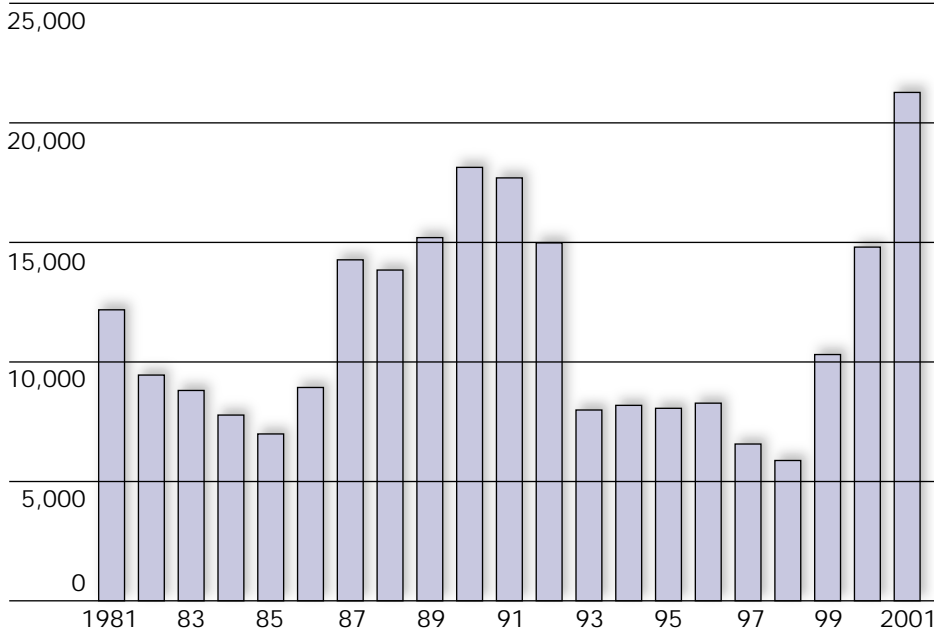
In the Past Four Decades, Alaska Salmon Harvests Have Trended Upward

Million fish



In the Last Few Years, U.S. Sea Scallop Landings Have Shown Marked Recovery

Metric tons



salmon represented 8 percent, by weight, of the total U.S. fishery harvest.

Expanding Well-Managed Fisheries

According to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), there are 959 federally managed fish species in the United States. The number of stocks with known status is 304, up from 279 stocks in 1997. Of these stocks, 81 are considered over-fished species, compared to 92 species in 2000. Among the over-fished species, 67 are steadily being rebuilt under programs that allow for limited, monitored fishing. Additional programs to restore the size and health of fish stocks are also being developed. ■

The author is an agricultural economist in FAS' Forest and Fishery Products Division. Tel.: (202) 720-6088; Fax: (202) 720-8461; E-mail: Reed.Blauer@usda.gov