

Glossary of Fishery Terms

Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) - A term used by a management agency, which refers to the range of allowable catch for a species or species group.

Allocation - Distribution of the opportunity to fish among user groups or individuals. The share a user group gets is sometimes based on historic harvest amounts.

Biomass - The total weight or volume of a species in a given area.

Bycatch - The harvest of fish or shellfish other than the species for which the fishing gear was set. Examples are blue crabs caught in shrimp trawls or sharks caught on a tuna longline. Bycatch is also often called incidental catch. Some bycatch is kept for sale.

Catch – Catch includes but is not limited to any activity that results in killing any fish or bringing any live fish on board a vessel.

Catch Per Unit of Effort (CPUE) - The number of fish caught from an area over some period of time. Typically, effort is a combination of gear type, gear size, and length of time gear is used. Some catch may be discarded.

Council - Indicates a regional fishery management group. The Magnuson Act of 1976 as amended created the regional councils. For example, in the southeast region, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council develops fishery policies designed to manage those species most often found in federal waters of the Gulf. The South Atlantic and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils do the same for their regional areas.

Effort - The amount of time and fishing power used to harvest fish. Fishing power includes gear size, boat size, and horsepower.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) - All waters from the seaward boundary of coastal states out to 200 nautical miles. Most states have a three mile territorial sea but Florida's state boundary extends to nine miles out on the west coast and 3 miles out on the east coast. Puerto Rico and Texas state boundaries also extend to nine miles out.

Fishery-Dependent and Fishery-Independent Data – Fishery-dependent data is collected on a fishery from commercial or sport fishermen and seafood dealers. Fishery-independent data is collected by scientists who catch the fish themselves during scientific research, rather than depending on fishermen and seafood dealers.

Fishery Management Plan (FMP) - A plan to achieve specified management goals for a fishery. It includes data, analyses, and management measures for a fishery.

Fishing Mortality (F) - A measurement of the rate of removal of fish from a population by fishing. The acceptable rates of fishing mortality vary from species to species.

Harvest - The total number or poundage of fish caught and kept from an area over a period of time. Note that landings, catch, and harvest are different.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) - A form of limited entry that gives private property rights to fishermen by assigning a fixed share of the catch to each fisherman. Sometimes referred to as an Individual Transferable Quota.

Landings - The number or poundage of fish unloaded at a dock by commercial fishermen or brought to shore by recreational fishermen for personal use. Landings are reported at the points at which fish are brought to shore. Note that landings, catch, and harvest define different things.

Limited Access Privilege (LAP) Programs - Limited Access Privilege (LAP) Programs are limited access systems whereby federal permits are issued to harvest a quantity of fish representing a portion of the TAC. LAPs may be distributed to individuals, communities, and held by Regional Fishing Associations.

Limited Entry - A program that limits the number of individual fishermen who can participate in a fishery. License limitation and the IFQ are two forms of limited entry.

Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold (MFMT) - A determined level used by fishery managers to assess whether a fish stock is undergoing overfishing. If fishing mortality rates exceed MFMT, a stock is determined to be undergoing overfishing.

Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) - A biomass level used by fishery managers to assess whether a fish stock is overfished. If the biomass of a fish stock falls below MSST, a stock is determined to be overfished.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act) - The federal law that created the regional councils and is the federal government's basis for fisheries management in the EEZ.

Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) - An annual survey by NOAA Fisheries Service to estimate the number, catch, and effort of recreational fishermen.

Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) - A program designed to provide a National framework for developing, testing and implementing an improved marine recreational fishing data collection program.

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) - The largest average catch that can be taken continuously (sustained) from a stock under average environmental conditions. This is often used as a management goal.

National Standards - The Magnuson Act requires that a federal fishery management plan and its regulations meet ten standards. The ten national standards were developed to identify the nation's interest in fish management.

Natural Mortality (M) - A measurement of the rate of removal of fish from a population from natural causes. The rates of natural mortality vary from species to species.

Optimum Yield (OY) - The harvest level for a species that achieves the greatest overall benefits, including economic, social, and biological considerations. Optimum yield is different from maximum sustainable yield in that MSY considers only the biology of the species.

Overfished - A stock or stock complex is considered overfished when its biomass or number of individuals falls below a minimum threshold. A rebuilding plan is required for stocks that are overfished.

Overfishing - Harvesting at a rate equal to or greater than that which will meet the management goal. A stock or stock complex is considered undergoing overfishing when fishing mortality rate exceeds MFMT.

Quota - The maximum number or weight of fish that can be legally landed in a time period. It can apply to the total fishery or an individual fisherman's share under an IFQ system.

Recruitment - The amount of fish added to the exploitable stock each year due to growth and/or migration into the fishing area. For example, the number of fish that grow to become vulnerable to the fishing gear in one year would be the recruitment to the fishable population that year. This term is also used in referring to the number of fish from a year class reaching a certain age.

Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) - SEDAR is a cooperative Fishery Management Council process initiated in 2002 to improve the quality and reliability of fishery stock assessments in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and US Caribbean. All SEDAR workshops are open to the public.

Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR) - The number of eggs that could be produced by an average fish recruiting to a fished stock divided by the number of eggs that could be produced by an average recruit in an unfished stock.

Spawning Stock Biomass - The total weight of the fish in a stock that are old enough to spawn.

Stock - A grouping of fish usually based on genetic relationship, geographic distribution, and movement patterns.

Stock Assessment – a scientific analysis on the condition of a fish stock and the interests of the fishermen and seafood processors who use the stock. Assessments are conducted by a panel of biologists, economists, and sociologists convened by a federal fishery management council. Panel members generally come from universities, and state and federal fisheries agencies.

Total Allowable Catch (TAC) - The annual recommended catch for a species or species group. The regional council sets the TAC from the range of the acceptable biological catch.

Total Mortality (Z) - A measurement of the rate of removal of fish from a population by both fishing and natural causes. The rate of total mortality may vary from species to species.

Sources:

Wallace, Richard K. and Kristen M. Fletcher. Understanding Fisheries Management: A Manual for understanding the Federal Fisheries Management Process, Including Analysis of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act. 2nd Edition. Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium