



NOAA Fisheries Service Sustainable Fisheries

*Science-based conservation
and management to promote
healthy marine ecosystems*

Sustainable Fisheries

The goal of the Sustainable Fisheries Division in the Northeast Region is to maintain healthy fish stocks, eliminate overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks and increase the long-term economic and social benefits to the nation from our living marine resources.

Primary Activities

The Sustainable Fisheries Division administers and implements programs involving the conservation and utilization of marine resources in the northeastern United States.

The division oversees review and the implementation of 14 fishery management plans and amendments to those plans for fisheries located in the Northeast -- from Maine to North Carolina. Managed species include: Atlantic sea scallops; summer flounder, cod, haddock, yellowtail flounder and other groundfish; surf clams; ocean quahogs; squid; Atlantic mackerel; butterfish; monkfish; Atlantic herring; bluefish; black sea bass; scup; spiny dogfish; tilefish; deep-sea red crab and skates. The division also implements other fishery management actions, manages days-at-sea leasing programs, issues exempted fishery permits, monitors catches and discards, and opens/closes fisheries as necessary.

Partnering and Interagency Coordination

Northeast domestic fisheries in federal waters (from 3 out to 200 miles) are managed on a cooperative basis by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Service. The councils develop the proposed actions for managed species and after agency review and approval, the Sustainable Fisheries Division implements the approved measures through regulations. The division also works with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and state agencies to develop consistent management measures across state and federal waters. The division also regularly consults with members of the commercial and recreational fishing community and environmental groups to refine management measures, and cooperates with other federal agencies and Canada to develop regulations and/or agreements to more effectively manage shared marine resources.

Applicable Laws

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is the primary U.S. federal fishery statute. The act authorizes the federal government to regulate fishing from 3 miles offshore out to 200 miles. In 1996, the act was amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act and included new mandates to better address fisheries bycatch, habitat conservation and new standards for fishery conservation that the councils and the agency must meet in managing federal fisheries. The act was further refined in 2006 by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act. The new law is groundbreaking in several respects because it:

- Mandates the use of annual catch limits and accountability measures to end overfishing;
- Provides for widespread market-based fishery management through limited access programs; and
- Calls for increased international cooperation.

The Sustainable Fisheries Division also reviews all fishery actions to ensure compliance with other applicable laws, including the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and other statutes and executive orders that govern actions involving the conservation and utilization of the region's marine resources.

Emerging Issues and Priorities

The division is working with both councils to develop annual catch limits and accountability measures for all managed fisheries and new limited access privilege approaches (e.g. individual fishing quotas and sector management) for some regulated species. Although sometimes controversial, these approaches may help address issues related to safety, marketing and capacity in commercial fisheries.

For more information on Sustainable Fisheries Division activities in the region, please visit our website: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/>

NOAA Fisheries Service
Northeast Regional Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
978-281-9300
<http://www.nero.gov>



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