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**NOAA Report: Swordfish, Three Other Stocks Fully Rebuilt;
None Added to Overfishing List**

Four fisheries stocks, including Atlantic swordfish, have now been rebuilt to healthy levels, according to a report to Congress from NOAA's Fisheries Service issued today.

Three stocks were removed from the overfishing list – those fished at a level that would threaten the stocks. For the first time since the report was issued in 1997, no stocks were added to the overfishing list.

In *Status of U.S. Fisheries*, NOAA scientists reported that 85 percent of the stocks examined (212 of 250 stocks) were free from overfishing, or not fished at too high a level. The report also examined whether stocks are overfished – a fish population too low to ensure a maximum sustainable harvest – and found that 77 percent of the stocks examined (157 of 203 stocks) were not overfished.

“By working with our regional fishery councils and commercial and recreational fishermen, we are getting closer every year to ending overfishing in our waters,” said Eric Schwaab, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. “With annual catch limits coming into effect this year, we expect our progress to accelerate.”

The report shows a continuing trend of year-over-year national improvements. This year's report matches last year's for the most stocks reported rebuilt – Atlantic scup, Atlantic black sea bass, and St. Matthew's Island, Alaska, blue king crab and Atlantic swordfish. Four more stocks – Winter skate and sailfish in the Atlantic, and bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish in the Pacific – had populations at an overfished level in 2008, but began rebuilding in 2009.

Atlantic scup, Gulf of Maine thorny skate, and Gulf of Mexico pink shrimp, which were previously fished at too high a level, were found to be free from overfishing now. Two stocks of Alaskan king crab with a previously unknown status were also found to be free from overfishing.

Canary rockfish, two stocks of coho salmon, and petrale sole populations, all found in the Pacific, declined in 2009 and are now considered overfished. Fish stocks defined as overfished may be struggling due to causes other than fishing pressure, such as habitat loss or predator-prey interactions.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, NOAA and the eight regional fishery management councils are required to end overfishing and prevent future overfishing through annual catch limits and accountability measures. Annual catch limits are required to be put in place by 2010 for stocks with unsustainable fishing, and by 2011 for all stocks.

To complete the annual report, NOAA examines a variety of sources, including landings data and log books, and conducts its own surveys. The 2009 Status of U.S. Fisheries, which contains data and analysis nationally and by region, is available online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm>.

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