



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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Annual stock report shows steady progress toward rebuilding our nation's fisheries

Note: Reporters are invited to attend media teleconference about the report at 1 p.m. Eastern today, Thursday, July 14. Please call NOAA Fisheries Public Affairs at 301-427-8003 for the call-in number and passcode.

Three fisheries stocks from the Northeast – Georges Bank haddock, Atlantic pollock and spiny dogfish – have now been rebuilt to healthy levels, bringing to 21 the number that have been rebuilt nationwide since 2000, according to a report to Congress from NOAA's Fisheries Service issued today.

"We are making great progress ending overfishing and rebuilding stocks around the nation," Eric Schwaab, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service said. "We are turning a corner as we see important fish stocks rebounding."

NOAA's *Status of U.S. Fisheries* reports on the fishing activity and population level for fish stocks in the country. Scientists announced today that in 2010, 84 percent of the stocks examined for fishing activity (213 of 253 stocks) were free from overfishing, or not fished at too high a level, and 77 percent of the stocks with known population levels (159 of 207 stocks) were above the overfished level, that level too low to provide the maximum sustainable yield.

"Commercial and recreational fishing depend on healthy and abundant fish stocks and marine ecosystems to provide lasting jobs, food and recreational opportunities," Schwaab said. "By working with the nation's eight regional management fishery councils and commercial and recreational fishermen, we are making steady progress each year to fully rebuild overfished stocks."

Beyond the three rebuilt northeastern stocks, there were other positive changes since last year:

- Four stocks were removed from the low-population list, all from the Northeast: Gulf of Maine haddock, American plaice, Gulf of Maine cod and southern New England windowpane
- Two stocks were removed from the list of stocks being fished at too high a level: Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and Southern Atlantic Coast black grouper.

Scientists examined more stocks than ever before in 2010, and findings on these stocks with a previously unknown status were mixed:

- Gulf of Mexico black grouper was found to be free from overfishing, and had a population above the low-population level.
- Southern Atlantic Coast black grouper was found to have a population above the low-population level.
- Pacific bluefin tuna was found to be fished at too high a level, though its population was above the low-population level.
- Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Atlantic wolffish was found to have a low population.

A handful of other stocks were moved onto the overfishing and overfished lists this year:

- Added to the list of stocks experiencing fishing at too high a level were Northwestern Atlantic witch flounder, Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank windowpane flounder, and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic windowpane flounder.

- Added to the list of low-population stocks were Northwestern Atlantic Coast witch flounder, Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank windowpane flounder, Georges Bank winter flounder, Southern Atlantic Coast red grouper, California Central Valley Sacramento (fall) chinook salmon, and Bering Sea southern Tanner crab.

Although it is often assumed that a stock has a low population due to too much fishing, other factors influence the health and abundance of fish stocks, including environmental changes, disease, and habitat degradation. Scientists believe that one of the stocks added to the overfished list, the Tanner crab in Alaska, may have been affected by environmental factors.

The report, which has been issued annually since 1997, summarizes the best available science for the 528 federally-managed fish stocks. Since not all stocks are targeted by commercial and recreational fishermen, NOAA prioritizes collecting information on the commercially and recreationally important species that constitute most of the domestic fishing activity in the country. Stocks are added or removed from the lists only when new information becomes available. Knowing the status of stocks allows fishery managers to identify and address problems, and effectively rebuild and maintain healthy stocks.

Under the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#), NOAA and the eight regional fishery management councils are required to end overfishing, use annual catch limits and accountability measures to prevent future overfishing, and rebuild stocks to levels that can provide the maximum sustainable yield. NOAA's Fisheries Service works with the regional fishery management councils around the country to end overfishing for all stocks. Annual catch limits and accountability measures are already in place for 203 of the 528 federally-managed fish stocks, including all stocks that are identified as being fished at too high a level.

Fully rebuilt, U.S fisheries are expected to add \$31 billion to the economy and an additional 500,000 jobs. Commercial and recreational fishing currently generate \$72 billion per year and support 1.9 million full and part-time jobs.

To complete the annual report, NOAA examines a variety of sources, including landings data and log books, and conducts its own surveys. The *2010 Status of U.S. Fisheries*, which contains data and analysis nationally and by region, is available online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2011/07/docs/report.pdf>.

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