



THE
PEW
CHARITABLE TRUSTS



Success Stories

Rebuilding U.S. Fisheries

Efforts to protect and rebuild America's ocean fish populations are working. Rebounding fish populations create jobs, support coastal economies, repair damaged marine ecosystems, provide increased recreational fishing opportunities and bring back fresh, local seafood. The benefits of ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted fish populations are far-reaching, and the cost of further delay would be significant.

Rebuilding would at least triple the net economic value of many U.S. fisheries'; estimates of the economic value include:

- \$31 billion in sales and support for 500,000 new U.S. jobs.²
- Up to \$500 million in New England.³
- \$570 million annually in the Mid-Atlantic.⁴

To ensure these benefits, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the law that governs federal fisheries, requires sustainable management of ocean fish populations based on two principles: Do not allow more fish to be taken in a year than nature can replace (in other words, end overfishing), and rebuild depleted fish populations.⁵

When fisheries managers have effectively implemented these conservation mandates, depleted ocean fish populations have fully recovered and others have made remarkable progress toward recovery.



PHOTO: JOAO GONCALVES

BLUEFISH (*POMATOMUS SALTATRIX*)

We must capitalize on these successes and finish the job of rebuilding valuable U.S. fisheries. Unfortunately, 38 federally managed fish populations are experiencing overfishing and another 46 populations remain at unhealthy levels.⁶

As numbers of ocean fish continue to rebound, Congress should reject proposals to delay or weaken conservation deadlines and instead support efforts to help fishermen weather any short-term economic hardships. Doing so would allow the nation to enjoy the benefits of healthy, sustainable fish populations while preserving them for future generations.

Fully Rebuilt Stocks

New England Scallops

During the 1990s, efforts to rebuild depleted New England groundfish populations brought an unexpected benefit. Areas critical to bottom fishing were closed, which enabled depleted Atlantic sea scallop populations to recover and become fully rebuilt by 2001.⁷ The U.S. Atlantic sea scallop fishery is now not only one of America's most valuable but also the most valuable wild scallop fishery in the world.⁸



PHOTO: DANN BLACKWOOD-USGS

SEA SCALLOP (*PLACOPECTEN MAGELLANICUS*)

Mid-Atlantic Bluefish

Officials determined the population of Mid-Atlantic bluefish was at an unhealthy level in the late 1990s. To recover this valuable fishery, federal managers implemented a nine-year rebuilding plan. The plan reached its goal a year ahead of schedule, and bluefish were declared fully rebuilt in 2009.⁹



PHOTO: JOE RICHARDS

BLUEFISH (*POMATOMUS SALTATRIX*)

Pacific Lingcod

When lingcod was found to be depleted in the Pacific Ocean, fisheries managers applied science-based measures to implement a 10-year rebuilding plan. The Pacific lingcod population was rebuilt several years ahead of schedule.¹⁰



PHOTO: JIM LYLE

LINGCOD (*OPHIODON ELONGATUS*)

On the Road to Recovery



PHOTO: HERB SEGARS

SUMMER FLOUNDER (*PARALICHTHYS DENTATUS*)

Mid-Atlantic Summer Flounder

Several years of catch reductions have allowed Mid-Atlantic summer flounder to rebound from decades of overfishing. In 2009, the population was already 77 percent rebuilt, and scientists are optimistic the stock will be fully rebuilt before the 2013 deadline.¹¹

Showing Promise



PHOTO: DON DEMARIA/SEAPICS.COM

RED SNAPPER (*LUTJANUS CAMPECHANUS*)

Gulf Red Snapper

The Gulf of Mexico red snapper population was subject to overfishing and remained depleted for decades—until new conservation and management measures were implemented in 2007.¹² Recent studies indicate Gulf red snapper populations are recovering.¹³ The most current stock assessment indicated that overfishing is ending, and Gulf red snapper have expanded in size, abundance and geographic range leading to a likely increase in catch levels this year.¹⁴ A continued commitment to prevent future overfishing and rebuild red snapper populations in the Gulf of Mexico will result in catch levels three times greater than today's.¹⁵

Endnotes

¹ U. R. Sumaila *et al.*, "Fish Economics: The Benefits of Rebuilding U.S. Ocean Fish Populations," Fisheries Economics Research Unit, Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. October 2005. http://feru.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/publications/Sumaila2005_RebuildingBenefitsUSA.pdf.

² National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), "MAFAC Catch Shares Presentation," p. 6. www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac/meetings/2009_11/docs/mafac_catch_shares_presentation.pdf; see also Steven A. Murawski, Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee, October 27, 2009, p. 7. http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/images/Documents/20091027/Insular/testimony_murawski.pdf.

³ New England Fishery Management Council, "Final Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan Including a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis," Figure 207, p. I-602. http://www.nefmc.org/nemulti/planamen/final_amend13_dec03_section_22.pdf.

Continued on following page

Endnotes continue

⁴ J. M. Gates, "Investing in Our Future: The Economic Case for Rebuilding Mid-Atlantic Fish Populations," Pew Environment Group (2009). www.endoverfishing.org/resources/PEG_rebuilding.pdf.

⁵ Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1854(e), www.nmfs.noaa.gov/msa2007/docs/act_draft.pdf.

⁶ NMFS, "2009 Status of U.S. Fisheries: Fourth Quarter Update," through Dec. 31, 2009. www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm.

⁷ NMFS "Fish Watch—U.S. Seafood Facts: 'Atlantic Sea Scallop,'" www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/atl_sea_scallop.htm.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ NMFS, "Fish Watch—U.S. Seafood Facts: 'Bluefish,'" www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/bluefish.htm.

¹⁰ NMFS, "Fish Watch—U.S. Seafood Facts: 'Lingcod,'" www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/lingcod.htm.

¹¹ MAFMC, "Summer Flounder Stock Assessment Update: 6 Things to Know," July 2009. www.mafmc.org/fmp/Summer_Flounder_Things_to_Know_July_2009.pdf.

¹² Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC), "Final Amendment 27 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and Amendment 14 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan," June 2007. <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapper/pdfs/FinalRFAmend27-ShrimpAmend14.pdf>.

¹³ GMFMC, "Standing and Special Reef Fish SSC Meeting Report," GMFMC February 2010 Briefing Book, Tab B, No. 5, February 2010. www.gulfcouncil.org/Beta/GMFMCWeb/downloads/BB%202010-02/A%20-%201%20CONTENTS.pdf.

¹⁴ GMFMC, "Draft Final Regulatory Amendment to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan," GMFMC, February 2010 Briefing Book, Tab B, No. 7, February 2010. www.gulfcouncil.org/Beta/GMFMCWeb/downloads/BB%202010-02/A%20-%201%20CONTENTS.pdf.

¹⁵ GMFMC, "Final Amendment 27 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and Amendment 14 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan," 2.0 Management Alternatives, Figure 2.1, "Estimated red snapper TAC (mp)," p. 10, June 2007. <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapper/pdfs/FinalRFAmend27-ShrimpAmend14.pdf>; see also GMFMC, "Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Frequently Asked Questions," August 2009. <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/pdfs/red%20snapper%20general%20FAQs%20August%2009.pdf>.

For more information, please contact:

Lee Crockett | Director of Federal Fisheries Policy | Pew Environment Group
(202) 552-2065 lcrockett@pewtrusts.org

Chris Dorsett | Director | Fish Conservation and Management | Ocean Conservancy
(512) 542-7431 cdorsett@oceanconservancy.org

Bradford H. Sewell | Senior Attorney | Natural Resources Defense Council
(212) 727-4507 bsewell@nrdc.org

Roberta Elias | Senior Program Officer | Marine and Fisheries Policy | World Wildlife Fund
(202) 495-4648 roberta.elias@wwfus.org

Buffy Baumann | Fisheries Advocate | Oceana
(202) 833-3900 bbaumann@oceana.org