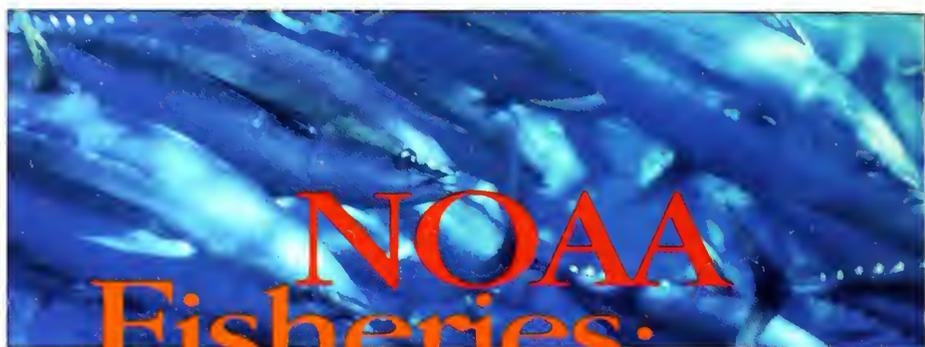




**NOAA**  
**Fisheries:**  
*Conserving*  
*Our Nation's*  
*Living*  
*Oceans*





# NOAA Fisheries: Conserving Our Nation's Living Oceans

*The National Marine Fisheries Service, or NOAA Fisheries, is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce.*

*Founded in 1871 as the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries, the agency was established to investigate and correct food-fish stock declines in New England waters.*

*At that time, little was known about the biology and populations of marine fish. But the Fish Commission and its successor agencies studied the fish populations and went on to assist the fishing industries in developing new seafood products, business markets and fishing opportunities for commercial and recreational fishermen nationwide.*

*Since then, the agency has become responsible for managing and sustaining most living marine resources and their habitat in U.S. waters. These resources, which belong to all U.S. citizens, include many species of fish, lobster, shrimp, crabs, clams, whales, dolphins, seals, and sea turtles, as well as the environment where these animals live, feed and breed.*

*NOAA Fisheries provides advice on how to protect these resources to ensure they remain healthy and available in federal waters. Federal*

**Who is  
NOAA  
Fisheries?  
What  
Does NOAA  
Fisheries  
Do?**



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*waters start three miles from shore and extend out 200 miles into the ocean, although seaward boundaries of Texas, Puerto Rico and the Gulf coast of Florida extend nine miles from shore.*

*In all, NOAA Fisheries manages 3.4 million square miles of ocean and coastal area.*

*Much of the NOAA Fisheries stewardship work involves researching the biology and populations status of marine animals and assessing their habitat needs. The agency protects endangered and threatened marine species and their habitat, and conducts cooperative marine research with other federal agencies, state fisheries agencies, universities and other organizations.*

*Additionally, NOAA Fisheries measures the social and economic effects of fishing practices and fishery regulations. The agency also enforces fisheries laws and plays an active role in managing fish and marine mammals that swim between waters of the United States and other countries.*

*The NOAA Fisheries team consists of professionals — including oceanographers, biologists, social scientists, economists, mathematicians, managers, administrative support personnel, technicians, and enforcement personnel — who work together and with fisheries professionals elsewhere to protect and achieve our nation's resource management goals.*



# What is the Mission of NOAA

## Fisheries?

*The NOAA  
Fisheries strategic  
plan contains three goals:*

-  *Rebuild and maintain sustainable fisheries*
-  *Promote the recovery of protected species*
-  *Protect and maintain the health of coastal marine habitats*



## Rebuilding and Maintaining Sustainable Fisheries

More than one-fifth of the world's most productive marine waters lies within U.S. territorial waters where in 1994, commercial fishermen brought to port 10.5 billion pounds of fish and shellfish, worth \$3.8 billion. In addition, an estimated 17 million people enjoy marine recreational fishing, landing almost 300 million pounds of fish each year. Many more fish are caught and released as part of a nationwide angler conservation program.

These vast fishery resources and their essential habitats can be rapidly destroyed if harvest is not carefully controlled or their important habitat goes unprotected. But with proper management, healthy stocks can be maintained, and diminished fish populations can be restored to bring greater wealth to the nation's coastal communities. Fisheries that are sustainable over the long term allow

United States citizens to reap the greatest economic and social benefit, including a continuing supply of high-quality seafood, and recreational enjoyment.

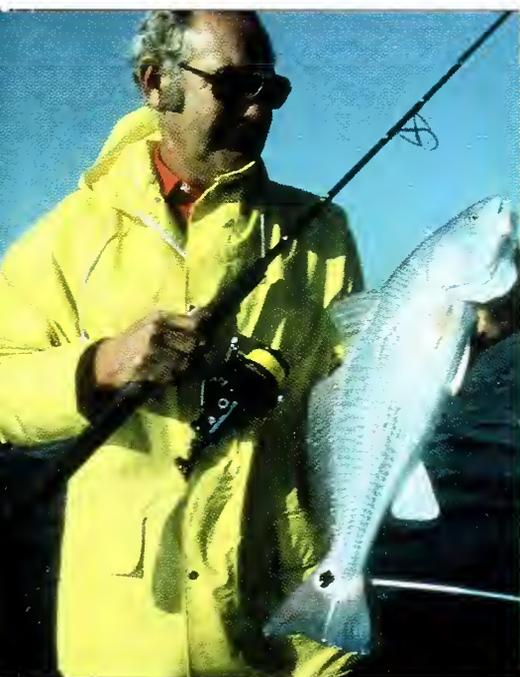
Sound scientific research is the basis for sustainable fisheries. To help ensure productive future harvests, NOAA Fisheries scientists study the life history, stock size, and ecology of economically important fishes, and the effects of climate and ocean processes on their populations. This information is used by fisheries managers to set annual quotas, or the amount of fish that can be harvested each year.

# Success

*SUSTAINABLE  
FISHERIES  
MANAGEMENT*



- The collapsed striped bass fishery off the Atlantic coast has recovered and widespread fishing is once again allowed.
- The Atlantic group of Spanish mackerel, heavily overfished, is recovering, permitting larger commercial and recreational harvests.
- The agency's management of North Pacific groundfish has kept the fishery the most productive and wealthiest in U.S. waters.
- The tuna and swordfish stocks fished in Western Pacific waters under U.S. jurisdiction remain healthy and yield enormous returns to the nation.
- The agency has made significant progress to restore many depleted fish stocks such as New England groundfish, Gulf of Mexico red snapper and Atlantic bluefin tuna.



## Recovering Protected Species

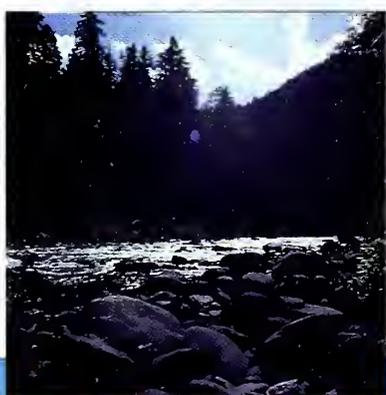
Many marine animals protected by Federal law, such as whales, dolphins, sea turtles, and many stocks of salmon, are affected by fisheries and other human activities, as well as by environmental change. NOAA Fisheries seeks to reduce the impacts of these activities on protected species while ensuring the viability of valuable fisheries. In fact, NOAA Fisheries is a major force in protecting marine species around the globe.



# PROTECTED SPECIES Success MANAGEMENT

- Through international cooperation, tuna caught in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean is now “dolphin-safe,” ensuring the health of dolphin stocks.
- The California gray whale, previously hunted to near extinction, has recovered to become the first marine mammal to be removed from the list of endangered species.
- Endangered Hawaiian monk seal pups are now carefully guarded to ensure their survival and abandoned young pups are being rehabilitated.
- Many endangered and threatened Pacific salmon stocks are now under federal protection, and their habitat is being restored.
- Innovative technologies have been developed and continually improved to allow endangered sea turtles to escape safely from shrimping nets in the Southeast.
- Cooperative enforcement programs have been developed with native Americans so that tribes can protect endangered Pacific salmon within their lands.
- Endangered right whales off New England are individually tracked by satellite to help maintain these fragile stocks.





## Protecting and Maintaining Ecosystem Health

Coastal habitats, such as estuaries

and reefs, provide food and shelter for marine and anadromous fish and shellfish during important stages of their life cycles. NOAA Fisheries monitors threats to these fragile ecosystems by monitoring development, water and sediment contamination, water diversion for industrial agriculture, sedimentation, and dredging and filling activities. The agency is a major force in maintaining the health of marine ecosystems by leading research to restore and create fish habitat, reviewing coastal development and water projects that may alter or destroy habitat, and recommending measures to offset development and use impacts.



## *ECOSYSTEM HEALTH MANAGEMENT:* Success

- Critical coral reef habitat destroyed by ship groundings in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is being restored.
- Federal and state cooperative efforts are being used to restore, protect, enhance and create Louisiana coastal wetlands that support some of the nation's most productive fish and wildlife resources.
- The damage to productive reefs from harvesting these fragile systems for home aquariums has been stopped, and aquaculture for this resource has been encouraged.
- Proposed siting for a large port and industry project in Alaska has been steered to areas where fisheries resources will not be affected.
- A federal, state and tribal cooperative program is being used to protect and recover sockeye salmon and chinook salmon habitat in the Columbia River Basin in the Northwest.
- An interagency project will restore more than 600 acres of coastal wetlands in southern California to become a nursery ground for juvenile halibut.

# NOAA Fisheries

*HOW RULES & REGULATIONS ARE MADE*

## How are the Federal Living Marine Resources Managed?

The nation's premier fisheries law, the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act, created eight Regional Fishery Management Councils that work in partnership with NOAA Fisheries to manage marine fish stocks. The council membership is a balance of commercial and recreational fishermen, marine scientists, and state and federal fisheries managers, who combine their knowledge to prepare fishery management plans for marine fish stocks in their respective geographic areas. These plans

can limit fishing effort, seasons, fishing gear, the number of fishermen allowed to fish for a certain species, and the total amount of fish that can be caught. The federal management process provides many opportunities for input from fishermen and others concerned with the use of these resources.

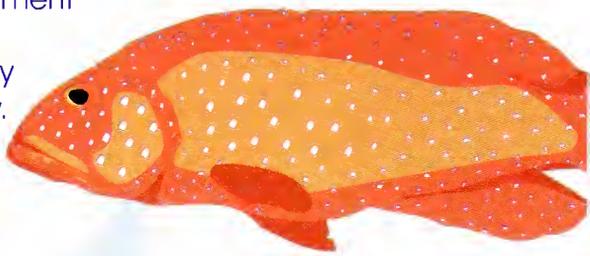
Similarly, NOAA Fisheries manages stocks of marine mammals, sea turtles, and protected salmon through a planning process that also features public comment, and advice from the regional fishery management councils.



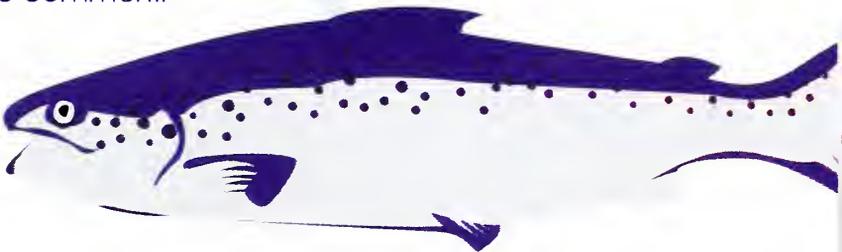
Fisheries Management Council identifies problem and proposes alternatives.  
Council holds public hearings and collects comments.



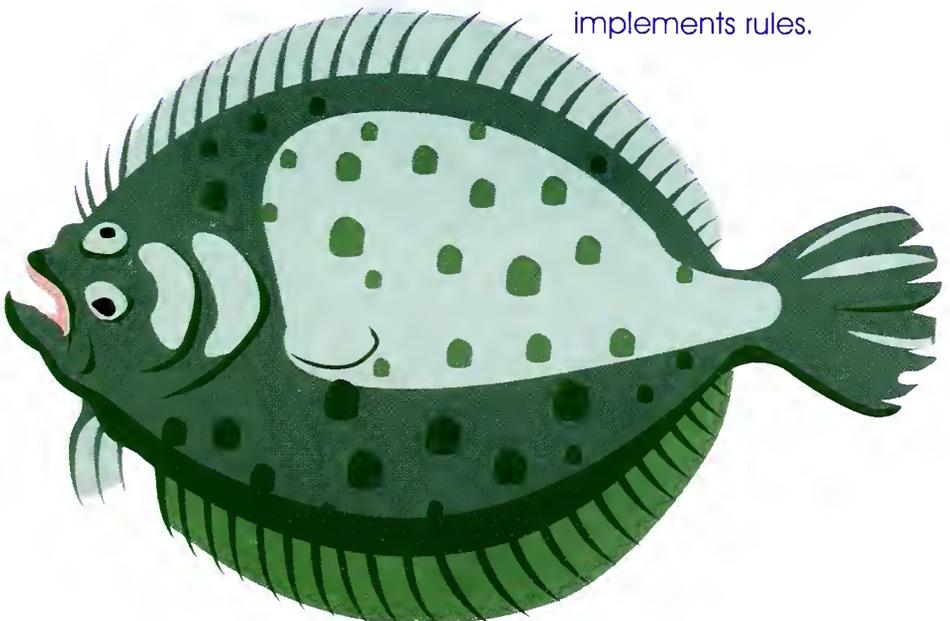
Council then reviews, approves fishery management plan or amendment and submits it to Commerce Secretary for formal review.



Commerce Department publishes proposed rule on plan or amendment and seeks further public comment.



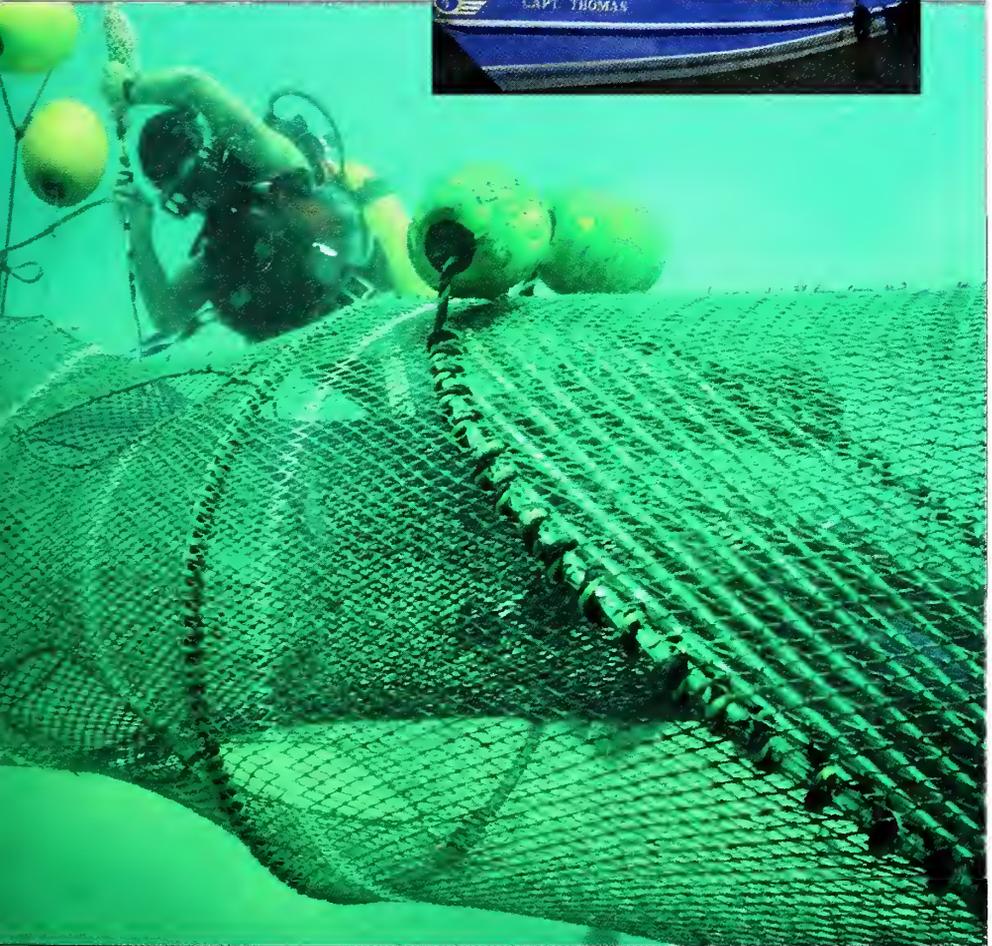
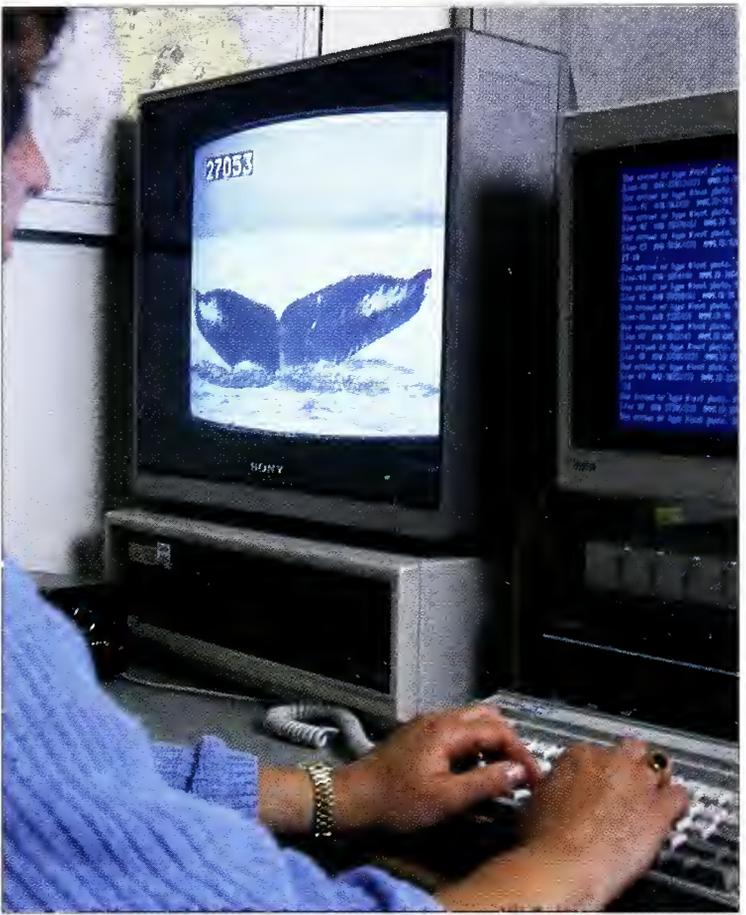
Upon further review,  
Commerce Secretary makes final decision on plan or amendment,  
NOAA Fisheries implements rules.



# What Marine Resource Laws Does NOAA Fisheries Follow?

NOAA Fisheries receives its ocean stewardship responsibilities under many federal laws, in addition to the **Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act**. Most important are the **Endangered Species Act**, which protects species determined to be threatened or endangered; the **Marine Mammal Protection Act**, which regulates interactions with marine mammals; the **Lacey Act**, which prohibits fish or wildlife transactions and activities that violate state, federal, native American tribal, or foreign laws; the **Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act**, which authorizes NOAA Fisheries to collect fisheries data and to advise other agencies on environmental decisions which affect living marine resources; and the **Federal Power Act**, which allows NOAA Fisheries to minimize effects of dam operations on anadromous fish, such as prescribing fish passageways that bypass dams. Many other statutes, international conventions, and treaties also guide NOAA Fisheries activities.





# Where Is NOAA Fisheries?

NOAA

Fisheries

headquarters is located in Silver Spring, Maryland, with five regional offices and supporting science centers in the Northeast, Southeast (including the U.S. Caribbean islands), Southwest (including Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific islands), Northwest, and Alaska.



## Where Can You Get More Information?

Publications: NOAA Fisheries publishes thousands of technical reports and announcements each year. Two important documents are *Our Living Oceans*, a report on the status of U.S. living marine resources, and *Fisheries of the United States*, providing commercial and recreational fisheries landings, trade data, and other important fisheries statistics. Information on these and other publications may be obtained from NOAA Fisheries Headquarters or the NOAA Fisheries Internet homepage.

NOAA Fisheries  
Internet Address:  
NOAA Fisheries  
<http://kingfish.ssp.nmfs.gov/home-page.html>

— *this homepage has links to many NOAA Fisheries offices nationwide and other marine related sites.*



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907-586-7221

**Alaska Fisheries Science Center**

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206-526-4000

**Northeast Region**

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Gloucester, MA 01930-2298  
508-281-9300

**Northeast Fisheries**

**Science Center**  
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2721 Executive Center Drive N.  
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