
Conserving Wild Fisheries

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Without swift action, ocean ecosystems will continue to deteriorate -- and so too will the sustenance, jobs, and recreational pleasures they provide.

- Many of the most popular fish -- like cod, snapper, and tuna -- are dangerously depleted, yet continue to be overfished.
- More than half of global fish populations are fully exploited and about one-third are overexploited or collapsed.[\[1\]](#)
- Studies estimate that overfishing costs about \$50 billion per year in lost fishing opportunities -- about half the value of the global seafood trade.[\[2\]](#)

It's not too late to get our fishing practices back on track. Using smart laws, policies, incentives, and market demand, we can help sustain fish populations at healthy levels for years to come. Countries like the United States have shown that these approaches are effective at reducing overfishing and rebuilding fish populations. NRDC has been promoting sustainable fishing practices in the U.S. for nearly two decades, and we're seeing signs of real progress.

According to a recent [NRDC report](#), 64 percent of once-overfished, monitored fish stocks nationwide have been rebuilt or made significant progress thanks to additional protections added to the federal fisheries law in 1996. This has translated into an economic boost to segments of the fishing industry, with gross commercial revenues for the rebuilt stocks up 92 percent (54 percent when adjusted for inflation).

What We Do

NRDC fights for sustainable fishing by crafting common sense fishing policies, promoting conservation-minded

approaches to how fisheries are managed, and enforcing and defending laws to stop destructive fishing practices.

Ensuring catch limits are based on science. Our lawyers and policy experts advocate for strong rules against destructive practices such as overfishing by ensuring that catch limits (i.e., annual fishing quotas) are based on science -- not politics or industry preferences.

- [Click here to learn how strong fisheries laws and regulations make a difference.](#)
- [Find out why sustainable fishing practices are good for the economy.](#)

Making sure smart policies are adopted on the water. NRDC works directly with government agencies, fisheries managers, and scientists to ensure that management decisions reflect the conservation mandates in the law and that local regulations are tailored to both biological and socio-economic realities. We use law and science to advocate for ending overfishing and restoring depleted fish populations. As a result of such conservation actions, many fish populations are staging a comeback.

- [Learn about the law that's helped bring America's marine fish populations back from the brink of collapse](#)
- Read our success stories on [Summer Flounder](#) and [Sturgeon](#)

Ensuring fishermen and the government abide by the law. Vested fishing interests seeking short-term gains at the expense of long-term sustainability may push the government to ignore common-sense requirements in the law. NRDC watchdogs fisheries management to make sure these requirements aren't ignored -- and if they are, our lawyers take those responsible to court. Our successful track record in court helps enforce laws requiring sustainable fishing practices, and enhances our credibility as an effective advocate in Congress, government agencies, and among the regional fisheries management councils.

What You Can Do

We can all support sustainable fishing by wisely choosing which fish to eat, spreading the word to friends and family, and contacting our lawmakers to make sure they support responsible policies.

- [Eat sustainably caught seafood.](#)
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