



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Successful Rebuilding of NE Fish Stocks Continues

Newburyport, MA NOAA released its annual Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress for 2002 this week. Building on the good news of last year, the report highlights the steady, incremental improvements in the status of America's fisheries. The notable gains in the overall stock size of New England groundfish were included as an example of this trend --- an increase from 170,000 metric tons in 1994 to over 450,000 metric tons in 2001.

The report also details the enormous success of the Scallop Fishery Management Plan. Management measures have produced a jump in landings from 22 million pounds in 1999 to over 32 million in 2000. Even as the stock was declared no longer overfished, a record 44 million pounds were landed in 2001.

Council Chairman Tom Hill of Gloucester, MA said he was very pleased with the 2002 report, crediting a number of innovative management programs and the sacrifices of New England fishermen. "I'm happy to see the improvements documented," Mr. Hill added.

Other 2002 major changes in New England stocks include:

- Gulf of Maine/northern Georges Bank stock of silver hake - fully rebuilt in 2002
- Atlantic pollock - assessed to be no longer overfished since the August 1 cutoff date for the report
- Redfish - no longer overfished
- Southern Georges Bank/mid-Atlantic silver hake - no longer overfished
- Gulf of Maine haddock - no longer subject to overfishing

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Page 2 – NE Fish Stocks Rebuild

Several New England groundfish stocks were returned to the overfished list in 2002. However, this was a result of changes in the overfishing definitions and calculations of biological reference points, when in fact the fish biomasses have steadily continued to increase. Five stocks were already managed under rebuilding programs and had made significant gains in recent years.

The Status of Stocks report is available online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/reports.html> and includes information about fishing activities on federally managed fish stocks to monitor whether fishing pressure is too high. If overfishing is occurring, NOAA Fisheries and the fishery management councils design plans to reduce fishing pressure to ensure that species do not become overfished. A fish stock that is newly listed as overfished sets in motion a series of actions that trigger development of a rebuilding plan. Status determinations for this year's report are based on fish stock assessments completed on or before August 1, 2002.

The New England Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils established by federal legislation in 1976, is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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