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Annual NOAA report shows a record number of rebuilt fisheries

A record six fish populations were declared rebuilt to healthy levels in 2011, bringing the number of rebuilt U.S. marine fish populations in the last 11 years to 27, according to a report to Congress out today from NOAA's Fisheries Service. This report documents historic progress toward ending overfishing and rebuilding our nation's fisheries, due to the commitment of fishermen, fishing communities, non-governmental organizations, scientists, and managers.

"With annual catch limits in place this year for all domestic fish populations and the continued commitment of fishermen to rebuild the stocks they rely on, we're making even greater progress in ending overfishing and rebuilding stocks around the nation," said Samuel Rauch, acting assistant NOAA administrator for fisheries. "Healthy and abundant fish populations and marine ecosystems support seafood for Americans, create lasting jobs, and enhance saltwater recreational fishing opportunities."

NOAA's *Status of U.S. Fisheries* report declares Bering Sea snow crab, Atlantic coast summer flounder, Gulf of Maine haddock, northern California coast Chinook salmon, Washington coast coho salmon, and Pacific coast widow rockfish fully rebuilt to healthy levels.

Two indicators of stock health increased slightly over 2010:

- 86 percent of the populations examined for fishing activity (222 of 258) were not subject to overfishing, or not fished at too high a level, compared to 84 percent in 2010;
- 79 percent of assessed populations (174 of 219) are not overfished, or were above levels that require a rebuilding plan, compared to 77 percent in 2010.

These data continue a long-term trend in rebuilding U.S. fisheries to sustainable and more productive levels that NOAA began tracking in 2000.

Although it is sometimes assumed that a fish population is low or "overfished" due to too much fishing, other factors also influence the health and abundance of fish populations, including environmental changes, disease, and degraded fish habitat.

"Fishermen, fishing communities, and seafood and sportfishing businesses are investing in the solutions that are helping end overfishing and rebuild our nation's fish populations," Rauch said. "These investments will continue to pay off and provide more economic opportunity and economic stability for the future."

NOAA studies predict that fully rebuilt fisheries are expected to add an estimated \$31 billion to the economy and an additional 500,000 jobs. Commercial and recreational fishing currently generates \$183 billion per year to the U.S. economy and supports more than 1.5 million full and part-time jobs.

To read the full report, regional reports on fish populations and to see photos, go to the NOAA Fisheries Service home page, <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

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