



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Science, Service, Stewardship



NOAA Fisheries Service promotes the stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management.

View the complete National Bycatch Report at:

[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/
bycatch.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/bycatch.htm)

The National Bycatch Report:

Understanding bycatch and improving fisheries data.

America's fisheries have been a source of income and recreation for generations. However, the impacts of fishing activities go beyond harvesting fish that eventually reach the dinner table. Sustainable management of the nation's fisheries requires comprehensive information on catch kept by recreational and commercial fishers as well as "bycatch" (incidental capture) of marine mammals, sea turtles, and seabirds, and fish that are not kept. NOAA works with the fishing industry to collect data on fisheries bycatch. This information is then used to evaluate the health of species that NOAA manages, develop new bycatch reduction research initiatives, and to implement regulations that conserve and protect marine species for future generations.

The National Bycatch Report is an unprecedented, nation-wide look at our efforts to monitor and estimate bycatch in federal commercial fisheries. Using data from 2005, this report:

- Establishes a baseline of data and methods for evaluating improvements to NOAA Fisheries bycatch assessment and mitigation;
- Provides estimates of bycatch at the fishery and species level;
- Identifies actions to enhance existing bycatch data collection and estimation; and
- Recommends actions to develop bycatch estimates for more of the nation's fisheries.

Summary of report findings:

- In 2005, 46% of the nation's federal commercial fisheries had high-quality bycatch data and estimation methods.
- The report included 81 fisheries-level bycatch estimates, as well as over 500 bycatch estimates for fish, marine mammals, sea turtles, and seabirds.
- Using these estimates, NOAA Fisheries calculated a national bycatch ratio (the ratio of fish bycatch to total fish catch) of 17% for 2005. Previous external reports (FAO, Oceana) indicated a national bycatch ratio of 22%.
- The report identified 396 key stocks for monitoring of bycatch levels over time, as well as 120 regional recommendations for improvements to bycatch data collection and estimation for key fisheries.

The National Bycatch Report



How will NOAA Fisheries use the information in the National Bycatch Report?

NOAA Fisheries Bycatch Goal, as stated in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, is to *"implement conservation and management measures that shall, to the extent practicable, (A) minimize bycatch and (B) to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such bycatch."*

Reliable bycatch estimates are critical to:

- Focusing research efforts for monitoring and reducing bycatch on fisheries and species of concern.
- Assessing the health of fish and protected species populations.
- Implementing regulatory measures to monitor and decrease bycatch and to evaluate their effectiveness.
- Providing reliable information to stakeholders and the public on fishery bycatch levels and the impact of fisheries upon individual species.

Looking forward: enhancing bycatch data collection and estimation.

Landings from commercial fisheries totaled 7.9 billion pounds in 2009 and were worth nearly \$4.0 billion, making the U.S. the 5th-largest producer of seafood in the world. In order to meet NOAA's bycatch management goals and maintain strong fishing industries, the National Bycatch Report makes the following national recommendations:

- Increase the number of fisheries and species bycatch estimates available.
- Develop and adopt best practices for estimating bycatch.
- Improve national and regional catch databases so that bycatch and landings data can be easily linked.
- Maintain and expand existing fisheries observer programs.
- Implement new observer programs for fisheries and species of interest.
- Evaluate the use of electronic systems for monitoring fisheries bycatch, and begin using these systems where they are cost-effective and appropriate.
- Continue to evaluate the quality of bycatch data and estimation methods to track the impact of investments.
- Produce timely updates to the National Bycatch Report.

Implementing these recommendations will reduce data gaps and increase the quantity and quality of bycatch estimates available for use in fisheries conservation and management.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to working with its partners to address their concerns and reduce bycatch.



NOAA/SEFSC



Nicole Gillies, NOAA

Learn more about NOAA Fisheries bycatch monitoring, research, and mitigation:

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/bycatch.htm