

## Rebuilding U.S. Fisheries: Success Stories

Efforts to protect and rebuild America's ocean fish populations are working. Rebounding fish populations create jobs, support coastal economies, repair damaged marine ecosystems, provide increased recreational fishing opportunities and bring back fresh, local seafood. The benefits of ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted fish populations are far-reaching, and the cost of further delay would be significant.

Rebuilding would at least triple the net economic value of many U.S. fisheries;<sup>1</sup> estimates of the economic value include:

- \$31 billion in annual sales and support for 500,000 new U.S. jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- Up to \$500 million in New England by 2026.<sup>3</sup>
- \$570 million annually in the Mid-Atlantic.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure these benefits, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the law that governs fisheries in federal waters, requires sustainable management of ocean fish populations based on two principles: prevent taking more fish in a year than nature can replace (in other words, end overfishing), and rebuild depleted fish populations.<sup>5</sup>

In fisheries where managers have effectively implemented these conservation mandates, depleted ocean fish populations have fully recovered and others have made remarkable progress toward recovery.



PHOTO: J. GONCALVES

BLUEFISH (*POMATOMUS SALTATRIX*)

We must capitalize on these successes and finish the job of rebuilding valuable U.S. fisheries. Unfortunately, 39 commercially and recreationally important federally managed fish populations are experiencing overfishing and another 43 populations remain at unhealthy levels.<sup>6</sup>

As America's ocean fish populations continue to rebound, Congress should reject proposals to delay or weaken conservation deadlines. Instead, it should support efforts to help fishermen weather any short-term economic hardships. Doing so would enable the nation to enjoy the benefits of healthy, sustainable fish populations while preserving them for future generations.

# Fully Rebuilt Stocks

## New England Scallops

During the 1990s, efforts to rebuild depleted New England groundfish populations brought an unexpected benefit. Critical bottom fishing areas were closed, which enabled depleted Atlantic sea scallop populations to recover and fully rebuild by 2001.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. Atlantic sea scallop fishery is now not only one of America's most valuable, but also the most valuable wild scallop fishery in the world.<sup>8</sup>



BY DANN BLACKWOOD/U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

SEA SCALLOP (*PLACOPECTEN MAGELLANICUS*)

## Mid-Atlantic Bluefish

Officials determined that the population of mid-Atlantic bluefish was at an unhealthy level in the late 1990s. To recover this valuable fishery, federal managers implemented a nine-year rebuilding plan, which reached its goal a year ahead of schedule, leading officials to declare bluefish fully rebuilt in 2009.<sup>9</sup>

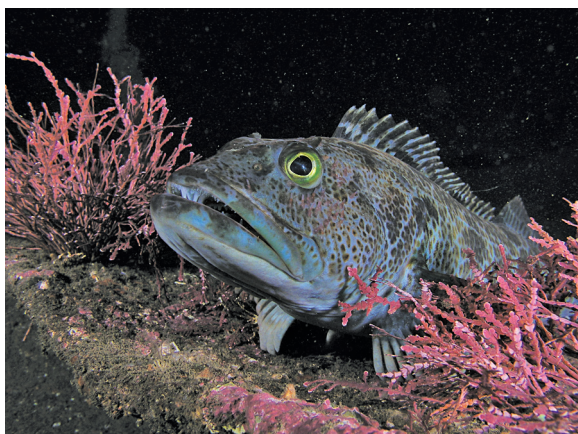


BY JOE RICHARDS

BLUEFISH (*POMATOMUS SALTATRIX*)

## Pacific Lingcod

When fisheries managers found lingcod to be depleted in the Pacific Ocean, they applied science-based measures to implement a 10-year rebuilding plan. The Pacific lingcod population was rebuilt several years ahead of schedule.<sup>10</sup>



BY JIM LYLE

LINGCOD (*OPHIODON ELONGATES*)

# On the Road to Recovery

BY HERB SEGARS



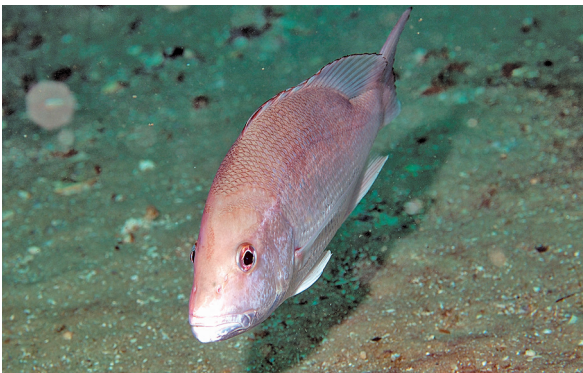
SUMMER FLOUNDER (*PARALICHTYS DENTATUS*)

## Mid-Atlantic Summer Flounder

Several years of catch reductions have allowed mid-Atlantic summer flounder to rebound from decades of overfishing. In 2010, the population was already 89 percent rebuilt, and scientists are optimistic that the stock will be fully rebuilt before the 2013 deadline.<sup>11</sup>

## Showing Promise

BY DON DEMARIA/SEAPICS.COM



RED SNAPPER (*LUTJANUS CAMPECHANUS*)

## Gulf Red Snapper

The Gulf of Mexico red snapper population was subject to overfishing and remained depleted for decades until new conservation and management measures were implemented in 2007.<sup>12</sup> The most recent stock assessment found that overfishing had stopped and Gulf red snapper were recovering as they increased in size, abundance and geographic range.<sup>13</sup> This finding led to an increase in catch levels in 2010.<sup>14</sup> A continued commitment to prevent future overfishing and rebuild red snapper populations in the Gulf of Mexico will result in catch levels three times greater than today's.<sup>15</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> U.R. Sumaila *et al.*, "Fish Economics: The Benefits of Rebuilding U.S. Ocean Fish Populations," Fisheries Economics Research Unit, Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. (October 2005), <[www.feru.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/publications/Sumaila2005\\_RebuildingBenefitsUSA.pdf](http://www.feru.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/publications/Sumaila2005_RebuildingBenefitsUSA.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), "MAFAC Catch Shares Presentation," p. 6, <[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac/meetings/2009\\_11/docs/mafac\\_catch\\_shares\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac/meetings/2009_11/docs/mafac_catch_shares_presentation.pdf)>; see also testimony of Steven Murawski to the House Natural Resources Committee. (Oct. 27, 2009), <<http://naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/MurawskiTestimony10.27.09.pdf>>.

<sup>3</sup> NMFS (December 2010). 2010 Status of U.S. Fisheries: Fourth Quarter Update, <[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm)>.

<sup>4</sup> J.M. Gates, "Investing in Our Future: The Economic Case for Rebuilding Mid-Atlantic Fish Populations," Pew Environment Group (2009), <[www.endoverfishing.org/resources/PEG\\_rebuilding.pdf](http://www.endoverfishing.org/resources/PEG_rebuilding.pdf)>.

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Endnotes continued

<sup>5</sup> Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1854(e), <[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/msa2007/docs/act\\_draft.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/msa2007/docs/act_draft.pdf)>.

<sup>6</sup> NMFS (December 2010). 2010 Status of U.S. Fisheries: Fourth Quarter Update, <[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm)>.

<sup>7</sup> NMFS "Fish Watch—U.S. Seafood Facts: 'Atlantic Sea Scallop,'" <[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/atl\\_sea\\_scallop.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/atl_sea_scallop.htm)>.

<sup>8</sup> New England Fisheries Science Center, NMFS, "Status of Fisheries Resources off the Northeastern U.S.," <[www.nefsc.noaa.gov/sos/spsyn/iv/scallop/](http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/sos/spsyn/iv/scallop/)>.

<sup>9</sup> NMFS, "Fish Watch—U.S. Seafood Facts: 'Bluefish,'" <[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/bluefish.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/bluefish.htm)>.

<sup>10</sup> NMFS, "Fish Watch—U.S. Seafood Facts: 'Lingcod,'" <[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/lingcod.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/lingcod.htm)>.

<sup>11</sup> MAFMC, "Summer Flounder Stock Assessment Update: 6 Things to Know," July 2010, <[www.mafmc.org/fmp/SF-SC-BSB/Summer\\_Flounder\\_Things\\_to\\_Know\\_July\\_2010.pdf](http://www.mafmc.org/fmp/SF-SC-BSB/Summer_Flounder_Things_to_Know_July_2010.pdf)>.

<sup>12</sup> Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC), "Final Amendment 27 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and Amendment 14 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan," June 2007. <<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapper/pdfs/FinalRFAMend27-ShrimpAmend14.pdf>>.

<sup>13</sup> GMFMC, "Stock Assessment of Red Snapper in the Gulf of Mexico: SEDAR Update Assessment 2009. Report of the Update Assessment Workshop," Dec. 3, 2009, <[www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/download/Red%20Snapper%20Update%202009%205.0.pdf?id=DOCUMENT](http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/download/Red%20Snapper%20Update%202009%205.0.pdf?id=DOCUMENT)>.

<sup>14</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Southeast Regional Office, "Southeast Fishery Bulletin FB10-027," April 29, 2010, <<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/bulletins/pdfs/2010/FB10-027%20Gulf%20Red%20Snapper%20FR%20Reg%20Amend.pdf>>.

<sup>15</sup> GMFMC, "Final Amendment 27 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and Amendment 14 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan," <[www.gulfcouncil.org/beta/GMFMCweb/downloads/Final%20RF%20Amend%2027-%20Shrimp%20Amend%2014.pdf](http://www.gulfcouncil.org/beta/GMFMCweb/downloads/Final%20RF%20Amend%2027-%20Shrimp%20Amend%2014.pdf)>.

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