THE **PEW** CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Herring Alliance

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Herring play a critical role in the marine food web, transferring energy from the plankton they consume to the many fish, mammals and birds that eat them.

CONSERVING A LINCHPIN OF THE SEA

The ocean waters of New England are among the more diverse and productive in the world. They are home to whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals, an array of marine birds, and economically important fish such as tuna, striped bass, and Atlantic cod. All of these species prey on Atlantic herring, a small fish that plays a critical role in the marine food web.

Herring began a slow recovery in the 1990s after foreign fishing fleets severely depleted their numbers in the 1970s. However, just as the herring began to recover, large midwater trawl vessels capable of operating 24 hours a day began catching huge quantities for a foreign market. The industrial herring fleet threatens to deplete this valu-

able inshore resource, thereby weakening the entire marine food web of the region. It also may be responsible for the needless destruction of other ocean species, such as whales, seals and fish that are caught and killed as unwanted bycatch in the large nets of these trawlers.

The Pew Environment Group is leading the Herring Alliance, a coalition of environmental and public interest organizations, to reform the Atlantic herring fishery in ways that will help protect the fishery and the marine ecosystem. The goals of this campaign are to
• Establish ecosystem-based catch limits that leave sufficient herring in the ocean to sustain marine predators;

• Apportion herring trawling spatially and temporally in order to minimize bycatch and avoid localized depletion; and
• Fully monitor and minimize bycatch of commercially and recreationally important fish stocks as well as whales, seals, dolphins and porpoises.

Atlantic herring is arguably the most important fish off the New England coast. This campaign aims to ensure that herring continue to be an abundant keystone prey species in this important marine ecosystem.