



New England Groundfish: *Cod, Haddock, Pollock, Hake, Flounders, etc.*

From the early American colonies well into the 20th century, cod was a mainstay of the New England economy and an icon of regional culture. Today, overfishing is depleting 11 groundfish populations, including dinnertime favorites cod and flounder, and causing harm to the region's economy and marine environment. The Pew Environment Group's work in the region has helped change the way this fishery is managed so fish populations can rebuild, and in turn, sustain more productive fishing and stronger coastal economies.

On May 1, 2010, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) implemented a new management system for groundfish in New England. It established 17 fishermen-run collectives, called sectors. Sectors were pioneered by fishermen as voluntary, cooperative and community-based, and were designed to protect fleet diversity and coastal communities. The new management system operates on three simple premises:

- It implements science-based catch limits to rebuild fish populations and prevent overfishing.
- It incorporates monitoring so fishermen and regulators know exactly how much fish is being caught, and as a result, fishing stops once catch limits have been reached.
- Each sector receives its own share of the annual catch. While respecting catch limits, the co-ops provide fishermen with the flexibility to set their own fishing guidelines so they can run their businesses more efficiently and profitably. Those who develop more innovative fishing gear can target more of the healthy fish populations and avoid those populations that are struggling.

In order to ensure the success of sectors, the campaign is working to ensure that NOAA Fisheries:

- creates more robust monitoring programs, so managers can track how many fish are landed and discarded. With improved data, scientists can better advise fisheries managers on setting future catch limits. Enhanced monitoring creates jobs, too.
- increases monitoring on vessels that did not join sectors, referred to as the common pool. If the common pool exceeds its limits -- as in the past -- fish populations won't rebuild, and there will be fewer fish for the sectors, and the new program could fail.
- reduces the time between when new scientific data is acquired and when it is incorporated in setting catch limits. Fishery managers need to base decisions on the most current numbers, to reduce bycatch, end overfishing and rebuild depleted stocks.

Sectors will help rebuild fish populations while fishermen reap the benefits of market demand. New England's sector program has just begun, and it deserves time to work.

The Pew Environment Group has partnered with two regionally-based commercial fishing organizations, the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association and the Midcoast (Maine) Fishermen's Association. Together, we are working to ensure that our shared goals are met: to end overfishing and protect the livelihoods of fishermen while groundfish populations rebuild.