SEAFOOD HARVESTERS OF AMERICA

U.S. Fisheries Management Explained

U.S. fisheries management involves scientists, researchers, managers, fishermen, and local communities working together to ensure the health and future of our fisheries resources, marine habitat, fishing businesses, and coastal communities. At its core, our fisheries management system relies on the science-based framework laid out by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (the MSA) which includes the eight regional fishery management councils (Councils) and the 10 National Standards.

What is a Fishery Management Plan (FMP)?

Each of the eight Councils develops Fishery Management Plans for the stocks and stock complexes under their geographic jurisdiction. An FMP contains the management goals and objectives for a particular fish stock or stock complex, past and present stock assessments, fishery habitat and water quality data, social and economic data that illustrates the impact of the fishery, and other information as relevant and useful. The FMP also includes proposed management measures that ensure the health of the fish stock while balancing the needs of the fishing industry and the environment. The proposed management measures contained with an FMP or one of its amendments become federal regulations when approved and implemented by the Secretary of Commerce. Regulations are enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard, enforcement agents from NMFS, and the states within the management region.

FMPs management measures include:*

- Annual catch limits for different sectors and gear types
- Allocations of fishery quota between sectors
- Bycatch reduction and mitigation requirements
- Rebuilding timelines when necessary

FMPs aim to:

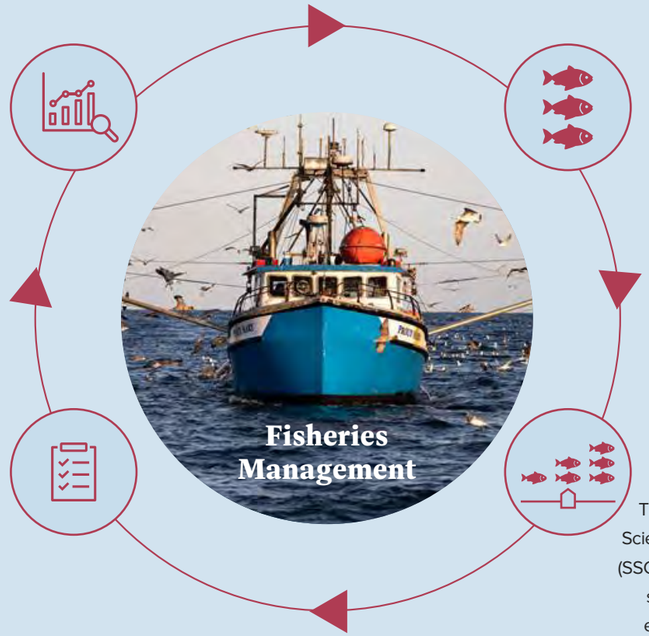
- Protect marine ecosystems
- Prevent overfishing
- Identify and protect essential fish habitat
- Balance the needs of the fishery

**Does not include full list.*

Fisheries Management Process Overview

Collecting Data
Accurate, timely data is the backbone of our fisheries management system. The types of data collected include: commercial data, recreational fishing data, scientific research, ecological data, observer data, among others. Better data and scientific research produces more reliable information about the health of fish stocks.

Management Regulations
Management regulations are developed by the Councils with input from fishery stakeholders, implemented by the Secretary of Commerce, and enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard, NMFS law enforcement, and States' law enforcement.

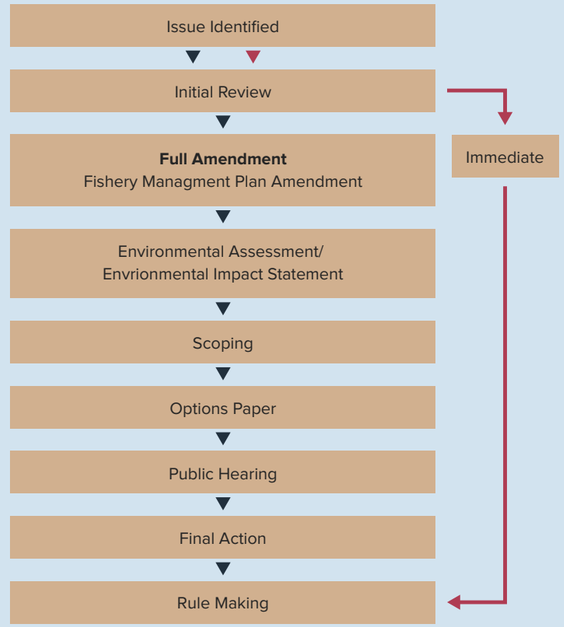


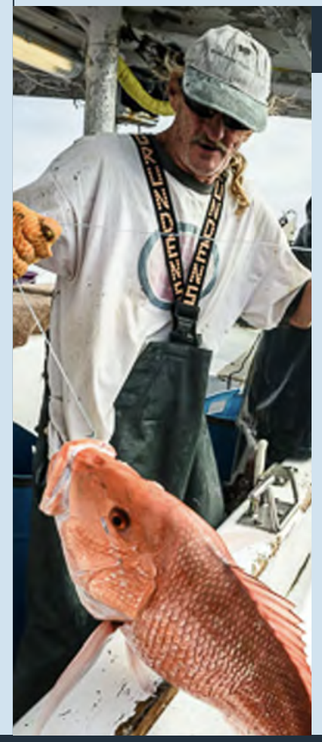
Stock Assessments
Annual stock assessments based on accurate and timely data inform management measures that ensure resource sustainability.

Setting Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)
The Councils, with input from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), set the annual catch limits for stocks under their jurisdiction to ensure the long-term health and viability of the fishery resource.

How are FMPs updated?

Implemented FMPs, FMP amendments, and regulations are regularly reviewed by the Councils and may be updated or modified after public comment to incorporate new scientific information, changing ocean conditions, or fishery needs.





Who are the Councils?

There are eight regional fishery management councils (Councils) that are responsible for managing the fisheries resources within our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Each Council covers a designated geographic region and is responsible for the long-term health and productivity of the fish stocks and marine ecosystem within their jurisdiction. Councils are comprised of voting and non-voting members and are required by law to be balanced across the fishing sectors.

Voting members

Voting members are nominated by their state governor and appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. Private citizens who are knowledgeable about fisheries are eligible to be appointed to the Council and may include: commercial and recreational fishermen, fishing industry leaders, environmentalists, academics, and tribal representatives. Voting members also include representatives from state agencies within the Council region.

Non-voting members

The Councils also have non-voting members that may include representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, State Department, USFWS, and interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions.

Advisory Bodies

Each Council has advisory groups which include technical teams, advisory panels, advisory subpanels, committees, and working groups that prepare and review relevant information and provide input to help the Council make decisions.

One of the most important advisory bodies is the **Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)**, which serves as the primary scientific and technical advisory body to the Council. It is made up of scientists that are independent of the Council.

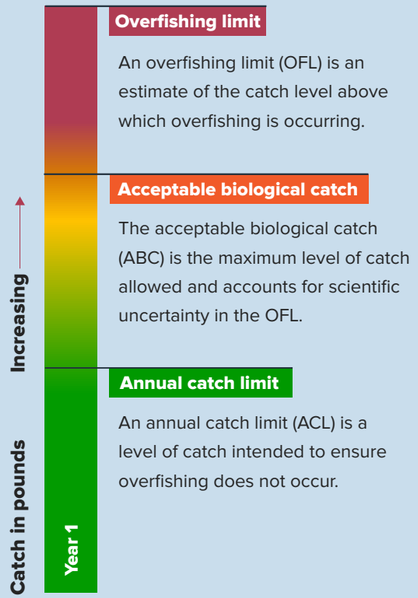
The SSC:

- Reviews FMPs, stock assessments, and rebuilding plans
- Identifies scientific resources required for the development of FMPs and FMP amendments
- Assists the Council in evaluating statistical, biological, economic, social, and other scientific information

U.S. Fisheries Management Explained

Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) & Accountability Measures (AMs)

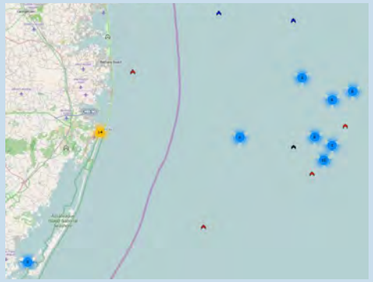
Annual catch limits are the levels of catch set by the Councils to ensure overfishing does not occur for a stock or stock complex. If a sector exceeds its ACL for a given year, an accountability measure is triggered. AMs are intended to correct or mitigate overages of the ACL when they occur to protect the long-term health of the fishery.



Who enforces fisheries management?

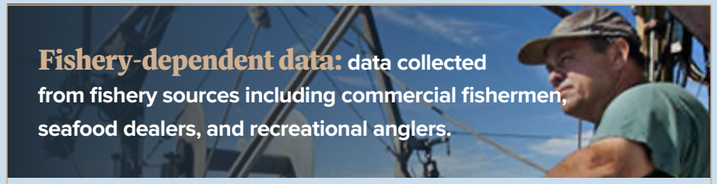
NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) enforces more than 40 laws designed to protect marine life and their habitat, including the MSA. Together with the **U.S. Coast Guard** and state law enforcement, NOAA OLE officers also enforce the rules and regulations adopted by the Councils.

One of the ways OLE and the U.S. Coast Guard enforces our fisheries management system is through the **Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)**. VMS is a system that is required on nearly all commercial fishing vessels. It uses satellite technology to monitor the location and movement of commercial vessels within U.S. waters and treaty areas to ensure fishing area compliance and for other management purposes.



Stock Assessments

The Stock assessment process includes collecting, analyzing, and reporting information in order to determine changes in the abundance of fish stocks and complexes and predicts future trends of stock abundance. There are three primary types of data used in stock assessments:



Fishery-dependent data: data collected from fishery sources including commercial fishermen, seafood dealers, and recreational anglers.

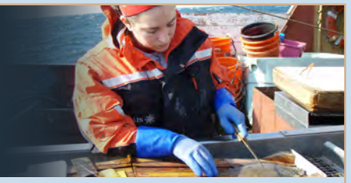
Types of fishery-dependent data include:

Catch data: includes records from commercial fishermen and dealers that detail general fishing location, gear used to catch fish, and how much fish was caught, which species were landed, and any discards.

Fisheries observer data: Fisheries observers go on fishing trips to collect data on the amount of catch and discards, as well as to collect biological samples and other data.

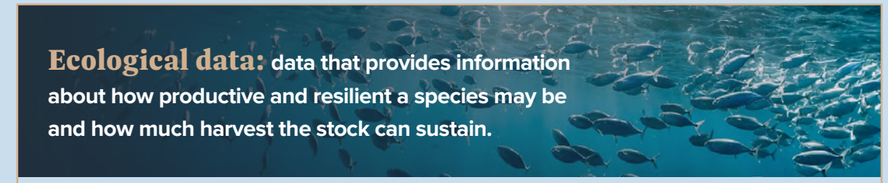
Dockside monitoring data: Dockside monitors verify submitted commercial catch reports, as well as collect biological samples of fish length, sex, and age.

Recreational sampling: NOAA conducts telephone interviews of recreational anglers and dockside sampling of recreational catch to estimate the catch and discards by the recreational sector.



Fishery-independent data: data collected by scientists and researchers independent of the fishing industry.

Fishery-independent data is collected by scientists conducting long-term resource monitoring projects known as fishery-independent surveys. These surveys, which are conducted at regular intervals (typically annually or biannually), follow consistent scientific methods using the same gear for the duration of the survey in order to gather unbiased and independent indices of abundance. Scientists and researchers depend on these historical time-series to track long-term abundance trends of fish stocks and stock complexes.



Ecological data: data that provides information about how productive and resilient a species may be and how much harvest the stock can sustain.

Ecological data provides critical information about the life history traits of a fish stock or stock complex that helps inform stock assessments and the resulting management measures.

Ecological data		Management & Assessment Uses
Life span (how long does it live?)	→	Estimate natural mortality and set maximum age in stock assessment models
Size (how large does it grow?)	→	Set size limits and estimate total biomass
Growth (how fast does it grow?)	→	Estimate how fast it will reach minimum size limits
Habitat (where does it live?)	→	Identify habitat needs and areas to protect

We are the Gold Standard

Thanks to our science-driven, transparent, public fisheries management system, the U.S. is considered the global gold standard in fisheries management. The management framework established under the MSA allows for the regional flexibility and specificity necessary to address issues while the conservation underpinnings of the Act prioritize the health of our fisheries resources, marine habitat, and ocean health. The 10 National Standards are principles outlined in the MSA that ensure sustainable and responsible fishery management and which must be followed by each Council. We are committed to working with NOAA and our Councils to continue to build upon our current successes.

Thanks to the MSA, we've been able to achieve:

47 stocks have been rebuilt*

92% of our fish stocks are not subject to overfishing*

80% of our fish stocks are not overfished*

The commercial fishing industry supports **1.25M Jobs****

The commercial fishing industry generated **$170.3B in sales****

*Status of the Stocks, 2020, **Fisheries Economics of the U.S., 2017

#Deck2DC

Sustainable fisheries support healthy coastal communities and economies, small business and provides a healthy product for people to eat.

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Visit www.seafoodharvesters.org to learn more.

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