

The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

Working Together to Reduce Observer-Related SASH Incidents at Sea

NOAA Fisheries is committed to making sure fishery observers' unique workplaces are as safe as possible. This includes a zero tolerance policy for Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment.

“Supporting observers is a top enforcement priority,” said Michael Henry, Acting Assistant Director of NOAA’s Office of Law Enforcement, Northeast Division. “We work hard to empower observers, educate fishermen, and pursue any and all credible allegations concerning an observer’s safety.”

NOAA’s Office of Law Enforcement and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center are longtime partners in addressing observer incidents. Our Northeast Division works with federal and state enforcement partners to conduct operations and educational outreach to promote observer safety and prevent harassment and interference. These efforts include:

- Developing an outreach strategy focusing on building a safety culture that is inclusive of both observers and fishermen.
- Hosting six webinar workshops for industry members and one for observers and observer providers. Register for our next workshop on July 10 at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/ensuring-safe-work-environment-observers-northeast>.



- Attending multiple observer roundtables and port-specific outreach events from Maine to North Carolina—familiarizing observers with OLE special agents and enforcement officers and identifying locations in need of additional observer coverage and outreach.
- Educating new observers on Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment and the process for referring observer-related incidents to OLE. This includes having the Director and Deputy Director of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center meet with observer training classes to emphasize the importance of working in partnership with fishing

vessel captains and crew, maintaining safety, and the need to report harassment if it occurs.

- Working in partnership with the Observer Program to promote early intervention—leading to successful mediation of issues before they could escalate to the level of a formal enforcement action.

We feel strongly that our increased efforts over the last year have aided both industry members and observers. These efforts will continue as a priority throughout the Northeast. In addition, on the national level, NOAA Fisheries published a Notice on Preventing Observer Harassment <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/notice-preventing-observer-harassment>. If you are a vessel owner, captain, or crew, we strongly encourage you to follow the guidance provided in the notice.

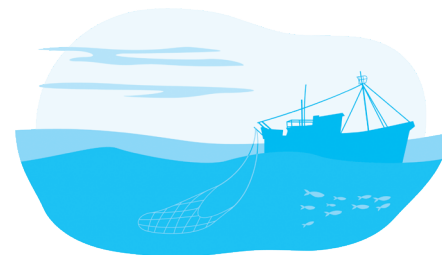
Learn more about the importance of observer safety here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/fisheries-observers/observer-safety>..

It is important to remember that Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment-related liability may extend beyond the offending person. If a crew member mistreats an observer and that mistreatment results in an incident, NOAA will assess the vessel owner’s and/or operator’s culpability. As indicated in the vessel owner’s and operator’s notice at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/notice-preventing-observer-harassment>, federal law now requires “the responsible entity” of a documented vessel to immediately report to the U.S. Coast Guard “any complaint or incident of harassment, sexual harassment, or sexual assault in violation of employer policy or law, of which such entity is made aware.”

For additional information, contact OLE’s Northeast Division (978) 281-9213 and select option 2 for compliance assistance. In addition, our Law Enforcement Hotline is always open at (800) 853-1964. For assistance through the science center, contact Sara Weeks sara.weeks@noaa.gov for more information. There are numerous victim advocacy resources available such as NOAA’s Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Helpline at <https://noasashhelpline.org/> and RAINN at <https://www.rainn.org/>.



NOAA photo



THIS SUPPLEMENT PROVIDED BY NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE'S GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE

Andrea Gomez, Ph.D. • Managing Editor • (978) 282-8481 • andrea.gomez@noaa.gov



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Helpful Tips to Safely Operate Your Vessel Around Whales

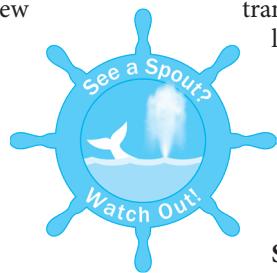
Large whales can be a safety hazard for commercial fishermen because they can surface unexpectedly and are hard to detect in certain weather conditions. Several species, including humpback whales, inhabit the New England and mid-Atlantic coasts in larger numbers to feed on sand lance, small schooling fish, and other types of prey. As whales feed at the surface and close to shore, the chances of encountering one increases. Accidental collisions with these large animals can be dangerous for everyone involved and can result in costly repairs to your boat.

A vessel of any size can strike a whale. Follow and share the following tips to keep yourself, your crew, and your friends safe when operating a vessel in waters shared by whales:

See A Spout? Watch Out! Did you see a spout, a tail, or a breaching whale? Slow down and post a lookout. Some whales dive 20 minutes or more. Seeing one whale at the surface means more could be nearby. Proceed cautiously!

Lots of Boats, Talk to Folks! If there is a commercial whale watching boat or group of boats at

idle or slowly underway, contact them via VHF radio (CH 9 or 16) to verify if whales are in the area. Ensure that you can safely transit past by posting a lookout and traveling at idle speed until you are certain the whale is a safe distance away.



Avoid Troubles, Steer Clear of Bubbles! Some whales, such as humpback whales, create “bubble clouds” and “bubble nets” to corral schools of small fish. Never approach or drive through bubbles. A feeding whale is likely to surface in that space!

When stopping to watch whales, it is also important to remember:

Head On Is Wrong! Whales are protected under federal law, so interrupting their natural behaviors is illegal. Parallel the whale’s course and direction while staying at least 100 ft away to avoid cutting off its path or getting too close. For North Atlantic right whales more space must be given, because it is illegal to approach within 1500 ft or 500 yds (5 football field lengths) in U.S. waters.

Don’t Chase, Give the Whales Space! If a whale moves away from your boat, don’t chase it. Respect the whales’ behavior and keep your distance. Cautious boaters may get to see exciting natural behaviors. Enjoy the whales; don’t endanger them or yourself.



Source: WDC

Before you head out:

Save NOAA’s stranding hotline to your phone: 1-866-755-6622. Call if you see an injured, dead or entangled marine mammal (whales, dolphins, or seals) and sea turtles from Maine-Virginia. Please note: sightings may always be reported to the US Coast Guard via VHF Ch. 16.

Download the free Whale Alert App on any Apple or Android device to report sightings of whales and to receive alerts about whale management areas.

Learn more! The *See a Spout? Watch Out!* program also offers a short, self-guided boater education course that is available free of charge. The first 300 participants to complete this course will receive a free pair of polarized sunglasses, complements of Whale and Dolphin Conservation! Go to the [See a Spout website](http://seeaspout.org) (seeaspout.org) for more information.

See a Spout? Watch Out! is sponsored and implemented by NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and New Bedford Whaling Museum.

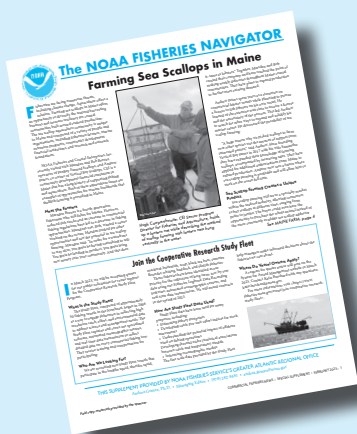


Source: WDC

Seeking Input for Upcoming NOAA Navigators: We want to hear from you!

What do YOU want to read in an upcoming edition of the NOAA Navigator? Are there specific topics you’d like to see more of or new topics you’d like to see added?

Please email Andrea at Andrea.Gomez@noaa.gov to share your ideas and feedback. We look forward to hearing from you!

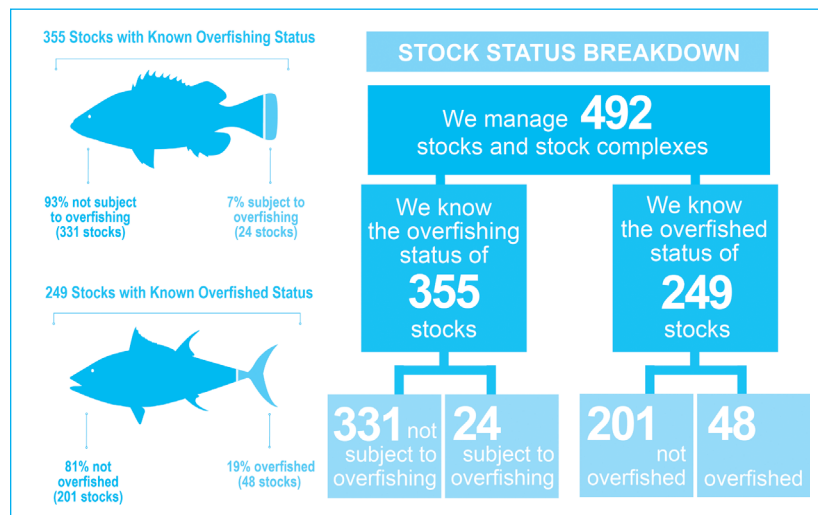


NOAA Fisheries Releases 2022 Status of Stocks

NOAA Fisheries has released the Annual Report to Congress on the Status of U.S. Fisheries. This report highlights successful management of U.S. fisheries and the broad economic impact of commercial and recreational fisheries on the U.S. economy. NOAA Fisheries manages 492 stocks or stock complexes in 45 fishery management plans.

We determine the status of fish stocks and stock complexes through stock assessments and by comparing catch data to an overfishing reference level. Of the 492 stocks and stock complexes, 355 have a known overfishing status (331 not subject to overfishing and 24 subject to overfishing) and 249 have a known overfished status (201 not overfished and 48 overfished). Of the stocks most targeted by fishermen, 88 percent have a known overfishing or overfished status. These stocks are contained in the Fish Stock Sustainability Index here: <<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/population-assessments/fish-stock-sustainability#fish-stock-sustainability-index>>.

A significant achievement this year includes implementing island-based fishery management plans for Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and St. John, and St. Croix. This action consolidated four existing Caribbean fishery management plans into three island-based plans and added 32 stocks and stock complexes to our list of managed stocks. The island-based fishery management plans account for the differences between fishing sectors, available markets for harvested products, fishermen and their fishing communities, and the social and cultural attributes unique to each island area.



- Two stocks were rebuilt, bringing the total to 49 rebuilt stocks since 2000

Note: One of this year's rebuilt stocks is considered rebuilt based on changes to its reference points.

Ending Overfishing under Effective Laws

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is the primary law that governs marine fisheries management in federal waters, and under this law the

Annual Report to Congress on the Status of U.S. Fisheries

Sustainable U.S. fisheries play an important role in the nation's economy. They provide opportunities for commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing, and sustainable seafood for consumers. This annual report provides a "snapshot" in time of the status of U.S. fisheries at the end of 2022.

NOAA Fisheries' 2022 Status of Stocks shows continued progress in science and management for U.S. fisheries. Key takeaways include:

- 93 percent of stocks are not subject to overfishing and 81 percent are not overfished
- The overfishing list included 24 stocks and the overfished list included 48 stocks, which are decreases from 2021

United States is an international leader in fisheries management. In 2022, 90 percent of all stocks or complexes did not exceed their annual catch limits. When catch limit overages occur, NOAA Fisheries and the Councils take steps to ensure overages do not continue. Annually monitoring catch levels and working to keep them within acceptable limits paired with taking corrective measures when limits are exceeded, helps reduce the chance of overfishing and ensures long-term biological and economic sustainability.

By ending overfishing and rebuilding stocks, we are strengthening the value of U.S. fisheries to the economy, our communities, and marine ecosystems. Read the Status of Stocks online at: <<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable-fisheries/status-stocks-2022>>.

Overfishing and Overfished Stocks as of December 31, 2022

- 48 On Overfished List
- 24 On Overfishing List

North Pacific

- Blue king crab – Pribilof Islands
- Blue king crab – St. Matthew Island
- Snow crab – Bering Sea

Pacific

- Chinook salmon – Klamath River fall
- Coho salmon – Queets¹
- Coho salmon – Juan de Fuca¹
- Pacific sardine – Northern subpopulation

Pacific and Western Pacific

- Pacific bluefin tuna – Pacific¹
- Swordfish – Eastern Pacific^{1,2}

Western Pacific

- Striped marlin – Western/Central Pacific¹
- Seamount Groundfish Complex – Hancock Seamount
- American Samoa Bottomfish Multi-species Complex
- Guam Bottomfish Multi-species Complex
- Oceanic whitetip shark – Western/Central Pacific¹
- Silky shark – Western/Central Pacific

Gulf of Mexico

- Greater amberjack
- Cobia
- Mid-Water Snapper Complex
- Gulf of Mexico Jacks Complex
- Gag – Gulf of Mexico
- Cubera snapper

Caribbean

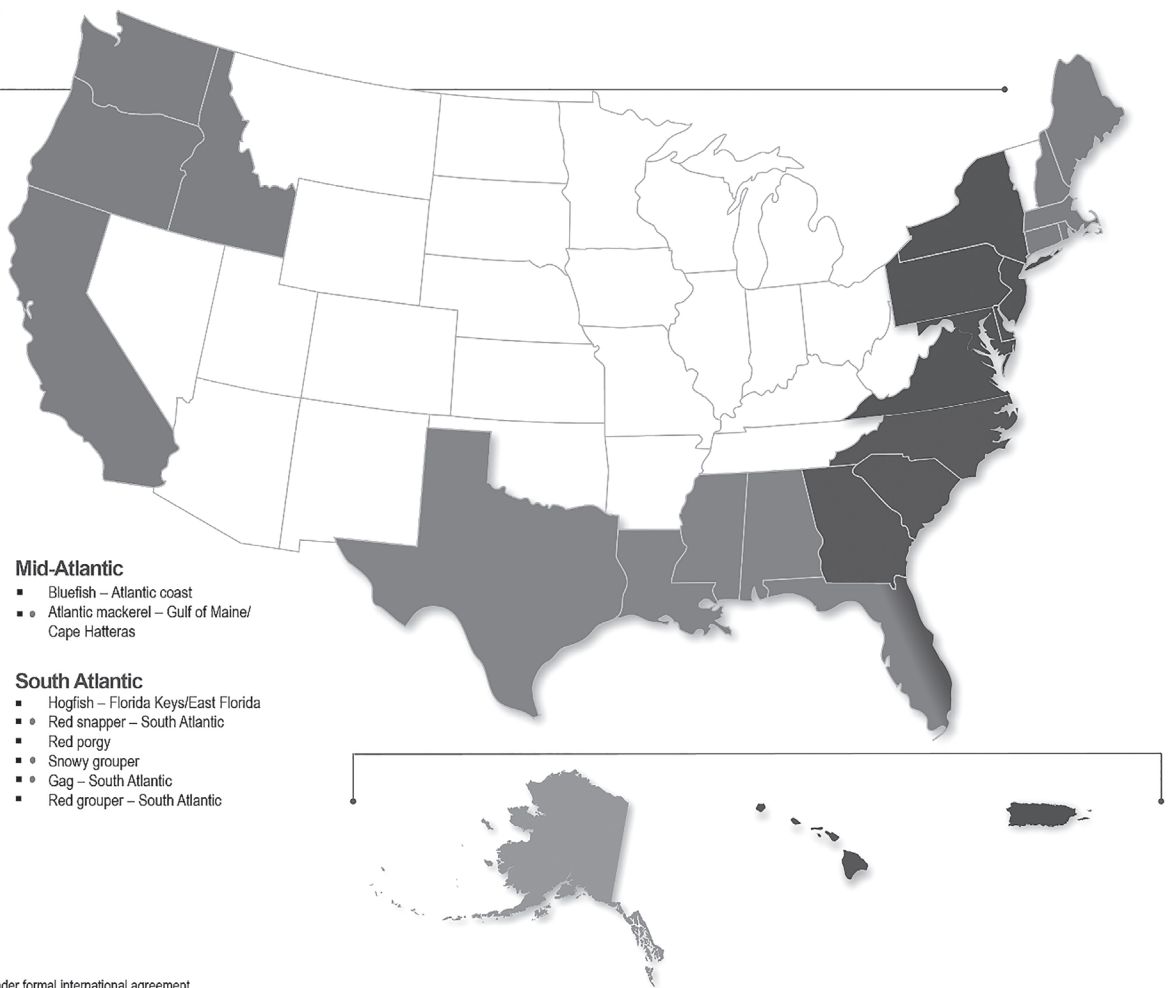
- Goliath grouper
- Nassau grouper
- Queen conch

New England

- Atlantic cod – Georges Bank
- Atlantic cod – Gulf of Maine
- Windowpane – Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank
- Witch flounder
- Yellowtail flounder – Georges Bank
- Yellowtail flounder – Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic
- Thorny skate – Gulf of Maine
- Atlantic halibut
- Atlantic salmon
- Atlantic wolffish
- Ocean pout
- Red hake – Southern Georges Bank/Mid-Atlantic
- Atlantic herring
- Haddock – Gulf of Maine

Highly Migratory Species

- Blacknose shark – Atlantic
- Blue marlin – Atlantic¹
- Dusky shark – Atlantic
- White marlin – Atlantic¹
- Scalloped hammerhead – Atlantic
- Porbeagle shark – Atlantic¹
- Sandbar shark – Atlantic
- Bigeye tuna – Atlantic¹
- Shortfin mako – North Atlantic¹



Mid-Atlantic

- Bluefish – Atlantic coast
- Atlantic mackerel – Gulf of Maine/Cape Hatteras

South Atlantic

- Hogfish – Florida Keys/East Florida
- Red snapper – South Atlantic
- Red porgy
- Snowy grouper
- Gag – South Atlantic
- Red grouper – South Atlantic

¹ Stock is fished by U.S. and international fleets under formal international agreement

² The geographic boundary of this stock extends from Mexico south and west to the Palmyra Atoll.



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Fishermen and Scientists Unite to Set Cooperative Research Priorities for New England and Mid-Atlantic Fisheries

The Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Cooperative Research Branch convened two summits in January and February 2023 to focus on cooperative fisheries research in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions. The summits brought together fishermen, scientists, and other stakeholders to discuss the challenges facing fisheries in the region and to develop a research agenda for the coming years. Over 40 members of the commercial and recreational fishing industries attended the summits. The summits included presentations on current

cooperative research initiatives, breakout panel discussions about industry-based surveys, offshore wind science, stock assessments, and conservation gear engineering, a poster and networking session, and a research prioritization exercise. In addition to serving as a forum to share information and coordinate ongoing cooperative research initiatives, the summits also provided opportunities for fishermen and scientists to develop new partnerships, which are critical to the success of fisheries research. A forthcoming written report will detail the

proceedings of the summits as well as the research priority rankings for the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions.

The top three research priorities identified by stakeholders in the New England region are:

- Research on the impacts of offshore wind on species, habitats, and oceanography
- Enhanced catch and effort data collection from commercial and recreational fisheries to support catch per unit effort indices and other scientific uses
- Research on the environmental drivers of resource species

The top three research priorities identified by stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region are:

- Research on the impacts of offshore wind on fishing operations
- Research on the impacts of offshore wind on species, habitats, and oceanography
- Research on the impacts of offshore wind on surveys and fishery data collection

The 2023 Northeast Cooperative Research Summits played a critical role in communicating, coordinating, and prioritizing cooperative research to support the sustainability of fisheries in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Going forward, the NEFSC's Cooperative Research Branch plans to hold a summit annually, rotating locations between New England and the Mid-Atlantic. For more information contact: <Giovanni.Gianesin@noaa.gov>.



Kim Hyde/NOAA Fisheries photo

Cooperative Research Branch Chief Anna Mercer (left) moderates a discussion during the Providence, RI Cooperative Research Summit.

Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to Implement Electronic Reporting Requirements Open for Comment



NOAA Fisheries is considering modifying or expanding reporting requirements for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS). Specifically, as part of this ANPR, NOAA Fisheries is requesting comments on requiring electronic submission of all HMS reporting using an online or mobile reporting application for federally permitted HMS commercial and recreational vessels, federal HMS dealers, and HMS exempted fishing permit (EFP) holders. Any comments received would help streamline and modernize HMS reporting for recreational and commercial fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries is considering options to:

- Convert existing commercial paper HMS logbooks to electronic logbooks;

- Expand logbook reporting to permit holders in additional commercial fisheries (e.g., Atlantic Tunas General Commercial permit, Atlantic Tunas Harpoon category permit, and/or Swordfish General Commercial permit) and certain recreational fisheries (e.g., HMS Charter/Headboat) via electronic logbooks;
- Collect additional information through existing electronic reporting mechanisms for HMS dealers and recreational permit holders;
- Facilitate HMS reporting, through incentives and/or penalties; and
- Provide electronic reporting for HMS EFP Program permit holders.

Comment and Public Hearings on the ANPR

The comment period for the ANPR is open through August 18, 2023. You may submit comments electronically at <http://www.regulations.gov>. NOAA Fisheries will hold five in-person public hearings and two public hearing webinars during the comment period.

For more information on how to submit a comment or attend a public hearing,

visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/advance-notice-proposed-rulemaking-electronic-reporting-requirements> or contact <Carrie.Soltanoff@noaa.gov>.

Dealer Reporting

As a reminder, it is a dealer's responsibility to report completely, accurately and on time. Please check with vessel owners as needed to ensure the correct (and full 14 digit eVTR number) and permit numbers are entered. Dealers who do not submit complete and accurate electronic reports may be considered out of compliance and could have their application held up until those requirements are met. Port Agents and staff are available to work with dealers to resolve technical and reporting issues.

