

**Wild
Oceans**
For the future of fishing

Fall Newsletter 2014

The Horizon

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- OCEAN VIEW: THE REAL COSTS OF INDUSTRIAL FISHING 2
- PACIFIC COUNCIL BACKS OFF PLANS TO END DRIFT NETTING 3
- 2014 IN REVIEW 4
- QUOTAS APPROVED FOR AMERICAN EEL FISHERIES 7
- SAVING STRIPED BASS...AGAIN 7
- LINES OUT FOR BLUEFIN 8
- STAFF TRAVEL LOG 9

RE-DISCOVERING SUSTAINABILITY

Arts and science

The future of fishing in the ocean will not be defined by the unsustainable practices we leave in the past, but by those we choose to replace them. Making the right choices, the focus of *Wild Oceans* activities in 2014, is both an art and a science. Discovering ways of fishing that are friendly to the environment, to fishermen and to coastal communities. Fisheries that will serve the enduring public interest while preserving the natural world that formed us and sustains us.

A century ago Teddy Roosevelt wisely noted that, while the profession of the “modern” naturalist is more than ever a science, it has also become an art. That’s even truer today, as our ever-accumulating knowledge about the world we live in and our impact on it, rather than telling us what we ought to do, can freeze us into inaction. Because science can tell us so much, we want more – unassailable science – before we act, often at the expense of doing what is intuitively obvious.

Sustainable fishing is not rocket science. It doesn’t require an endless stream of data to plug into staggeringly complex models to make it fly. To pursue that course is to chase an ever-receding mi-

rage. What it does require is imagination.

Industrial-scale fishing – with longlines, drift nets and bottom trawls - lacks imagination, treating fishing as a mathematical equation, the ratio of profits to costs, with the real costs to society – economic as well as ecological - rarely factored in. (see *Ocean View*, p. 2) Selective, sustainable fishing, on the other hand, is a liberal mix of science, creativity and tradition. The art of selective fishing, smaller in scale but far from anti-modern, often means re-learning traditional ways of doing things because, in the words of Leon Wieseltier, “we have discovered in them resources for contemporary sustenance.”

David Western, in his seminal book on preserving African wildlife, *In The Dust of Kilimanjaro*, argues there is more space for a diversity of wildlife alongside humans if we “rediscover the art of co-existence.” At sea, as on Africa’s savannas, that means turning its enemies into its friends, fishing in ways that serve our needs while protecting the broader ecosystem and its living communities. It means, above all, resource sharing, an entirely natural concept that is essential to our co-existence with wild oceans.

Our Mission

Wild Oceans was founded by anglers in 1973. Like the sportsmen before us who pioneered wildlife conservation on land, we are passionate protectors of fish and the wild world we share.

Our mission is to keep the oceans wild to preserve fishing opportunities for the future. To do this, we bring conservation-minded fishermen and pro-fishing environmentalists together to promote a broad, ecosystems approach to fisheries management that reflects our expanding circle of concern for all marine life and the future of fishing.

So much of what we love about the sea, about fish, about fishing, is in the wildness. But that wild world, and the future of fishing, now hangs in the balance. Everything we do, every decision we make, must be guided by a clear vision of the future we want for our oceans and of how the fishing public and responsible consumers will fit into that future.

The real costs of industrial fishing

The costs associated with fishing large-scale, indiscriminate gears, like the mile-long drift nets and forty-mile longlines still being used by American fishermen, are enormous. At the top of the list is the collateral damage to “unintended targets”; an oxymoron that aptly describes the many other species of fish, marine mammals and sea turtles that are just as likely to become hooked or entangled as the intended catch.

In an attempt to sort it all out, the government struggles to impose a veritable maze of regulations, which the fishing industry then chalks up as a cost of doing business. But it's the taxpayer that is really footing the bill, in effect subsidizing methods of fishing whose true costs exceed their benefits.

The public pays to conserve and manage our fisheries because there are tangible benefits, namely the privilege of being able to fish for a living or recreation, to put food on the table, and to provide jobs. But there are significant costs associated with managing fisheries. And fishing that has a high rate of bycatch, discards and waste requires substantially more management, in terms of regulations, catch monitoring and enforcement, than more selective gears. These management costs must be weighed against the economic return to the public, but they aren't.

As Theresa Labriola reports on page 3, fishery managers, like those at the Pacific Council, will go to great lengths – and spend lots of other people's money – in order to keep these gears in the water.

Nowhere in the Council's cost/benefit analyses does it consider management costs. That's doing the public a great disservice. Likewise, the Council misleads the public regarding the vi-

ability of more selective gears, such as buoy-gear and harpoons, by not considering the enormous benefits – social and economic – of management costs avoided.

As Theresa points out, we're working to change that. Our performance criteria for drift gill nets and alternative gears weigh the costs to the public relative to the return. Likewise, the benefits of management costs avoided are factored in to the economic viability of more selective gears.

On page 8 we report on the latest rules to curtail bycatch in the Atlantic longline fishery, a battle that's been on-going for decades. Like the battle over drift nets, it's still not over and every victory has come at a price. As the Greek philosopher Anonymous said, every time history repeats itself the price goes up. It's time for fishery managers to open their eyes to the real costs of industrial fishing and make the transition to safer, more sustainable fishing now.

- Ken Hinman, President

For the Future of Fishing

Wild Oceans is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the oceans wild to preserve fishing opportunities for the future.

Our Goals:

- preventing overfishing and restoring depleted fish populations to healthy levels
- promoting sustainable use policies that balance commercial, recreational and ecological values
- modifying or eliminating wasteful fishing practices
- improving our understanding of fish and their role in the marine environment
- preserving fish habitat and water quality

Officers and Staff:

Tim Choate, Chairman
Rick Weber, Vice Chairman
Ken Hinman, President
Pam Lyons Gromen, Executive Director
Laureen Megan, Office Manager
Theresa Labriola, West Coast Fisheries Project Director

Contact Us:
Wild Oceans
P.O. Box 258
Waterford, VA 20197
office: 703.777.0037
web: wildoceans.org

Board of Directors:

Stanley Arkin (New York, NY)
Mary Barley (Islamorada, FL)
Bill Boyce (Saugus, CA)
C. J. Bright, Jr. (Kailua-Kona, HI)
Stephanie Osgood Choate (Miami, FL)
Tim Choate (Coral Gables, FL)
John Heyer (Sedona, AZ)
Sandra Kaupe (Palm Beach, FL)
Sabrina Kleinknecht (Monterey, CA)
Rick Weber (Cape May, NJ)
Christopher Weld (Essex, MA)

COUNCIL LOSES FOCUS BUT WILD OCEANS' VISION FOR SWORDFISH FISHERY REMAINS CLEAR

Pacific council backs off plans to end drift netting



Image courtesy of NOAA

There was widespread public support for the Pacific Council's decision in March 2014 to end the use of drift nets in the eastern Pacific swordfish fishery and develop a transition plan to replace the gear with more economically and environmentally sustainable gear types. On the heels of that decision, we proposed a five step plan to help the Council facilitate the transition (see the Summer 2014 edition of the *Wild Oceans Horizon* for details of our plan), starting with developing more selective fishing gears that yield a greater percentage of target species relative to bycatch.

Then, in November, the Council broke its promise to the public. Instead of moving toward elimination of drift nets from the fishery, they agreed that if drift nets can operate within agreed-upon bycatch limits for endangered marine mammals and turtles, they can continue to operate. Indefinitely. Perhaps even expand their current fishing grounds.

The Council's transition plan for a cleaner fishery was supposed to culminate in the adoption of more selective gears while allowing the drift net fishery to operate in the interim. Research protocols were to be developed for evaluating alternative gear proposals. But now, the hard caps on vulnerable species that were intended as short term and temporary measures are being viewed as a permanent fix – the ultimate solution

to the fishery's problems. It isn't. And we are going to hold the Council's feet to the fire until we have a cleaner fishery.

So what's our plan? Over the next year, we'll focus on:

- Supporting alternative gear research;
- Exploring new markets for swordfish caught with selective gear; and,
- Developing bycatch thresholds for fish like striped marlin.

First up, the Council will review whether to allow the use of alternative gears, such as swordfish buoy gear. We'll throw our support behind highly selective fishing gear while keeping antiquated, indiscriminate gear, like longlines, out of the water. In order to do this, we'll evaluate the performance of gear based on its ability to catch a higher percentage of swordfish, and we'll look at the cost associated with managing the gear, including regulation, management and enforcement, relative to the economic return.

Next, we'll help consumers understand that swordfish caught with actively tended gear, such as buoy gear, commands a higher price at the dock than swordfish caught with drift nets, not only because it's fresher and tastes better, but because it has a much smaller impact on the

rest of the ocean ecosystem, including marlin, tuna and sharks. The bottom line is that if swordfish caught with buoy gear prove more profitable, then fishermen will have a market incentive to switch to this innovative fishing method.

Finally, we'll support the implementation of conservative hard catch caps on endangered marine mammals and turtles, forcing the fishery to close if one of these limits is reached. But, we won't let the Council forget that it is also their responsibility to minimize bycatch of threatened species and finfish. By focusing on finfish conservation needs separately from endangered species, we have an opportunity to tailor management measures that offer effective protection, as finfish interact with drift nets differently on a much greater scale.

Although the Council's recent actions regarding the swordfish fishery have veered off their original course to sustainability, we will make it our priority to get them back on track. Our vision for the west coast swordfish fishery remains clear – selective gears that bring prized swordfish to market with greater economic return and negligible impact to the ecosystem.

-Theresa Labriola

West Coast Fisheries Project Director

2014 in review

Through five conservation programs, *Wild Oceans* pursues a vision of fishing that is in harmony with the environment, so the public can enjoy fishing opportunities for generations to come. We are proud to report to our members that 2014 was a year where we moved closer to that vision on several fronts.

I. Bring Back the Big Fish

We continue to make steady progress in promoting a progressive shift away from wasteful and ultimately unmanageable methods of fishing, such as multi-mile pelagic longlines and drift entanglement nets, to more selective, sustainable fishing methods that protect non-target species, among them overfished marlin and bluefin tuna, sharks, sea turtles and marine birds.

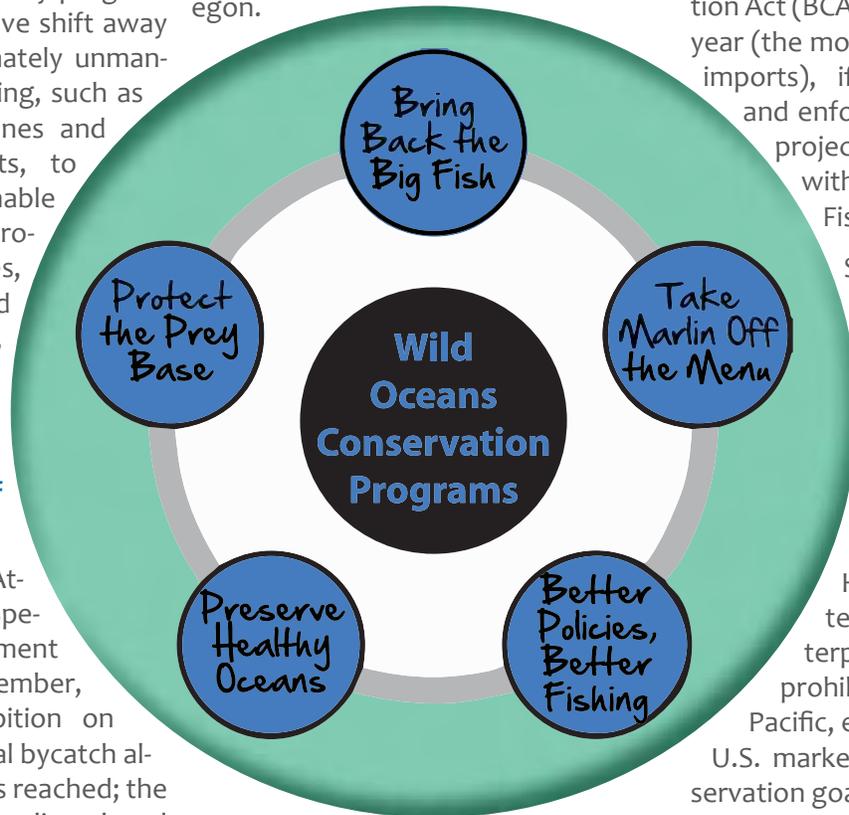
Atlantic: Eliminate Longline Bycatch of Bluefin Tuna

Amendment 7 to the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan, made final in November, includes a total prohibition on longlining when an annual bycatch allowance of bluefin tuna is reached; the addition of three new longline closed areas in important feeding and spawning grounds, including the Gulf; and enhanced reporting and monitoring of all longline vessels to enforce the new limits. (For details, see *Lines Out for Bluefin*, p. 8)

The product of 5 years of hard work, the plan is a big step forward on a long-standing problem, enacting badly needed measures to reduce longline interactions with bluefin tuna along with innovative ways to hold fishermen accountable. We estimate the new rules will save approximately 600 giant tunas a year.

Pacific: Phase-Out Drift Nets, Research Alternative Gears

Wild Oceans continues to work through the Pacific Fishery Management Council to promote alternatives to ecologically-harmful drift entanglement nets in the west coast swordfish fishery. An important element of our work in 2014 has been the addition to our staff of Theresa Labriola, West Coast Fisheries Project Director based in Portland, Oregon.



In March of this year, the Pacific Council responded to concerns about the continued use of drift nets by adopting “a goal of developing a comprehensive plan to transition the current drift gill-net fishery to a fishery utilizing a suite of more environmentally and economically sustainable gear types.” To this end, we are working with the Council to formulate a transition strategy, featuring a timeline for phasing out drift nets from the eastern Pacific. (See Theresa's story on p. 3.)

II. Take Marlin Off the Menu

We continue to build on progress we've made in eliminating billfish from commercial markets in the United States, most notably the enactment of federal legislation to prohibit the importation and sale of marlin, sailfish and spearfish.

Billfish Conservation Act

We estimate that the Billfish Conservation Act (BCA) will save 30,000 marlin a year (the most recent estimate of U.S. imports), if properly implemented and enforced. Our efforts on this project are done in partnership with the International Game Fish Association.

Since passage of the BCA, we've been working with NOAA Fisheries in support of a strict prohibition on any sales of marlin, sailfish and spearfish on the continental U.S., regardless of origin, i.e., fish exempted for sale in Hawaii and nearby island territories. With this interpretation, the chances of prohibited billfish, Atlantic or Pacific, entering illegitimately into U.S. markets and undermining conservation goals will be slim to none.

Throughout the year *Wild Oceans* and IGFA monitored the Administration relative to its proposed rulemaking, including meeting with NOAA officials. The agency has issued an advisory against sale of all species of billfish on the U.S. mainland until it issues a Final Rule, expected in early 2015. During 2014, we assembled what we believe to be an unassailable case, using the legislative record (2011-12) and other documents, demonstrating Congressional intent in passing the BCA and the need to prevent an “exemption loophole” for Hawaii from undermining its intended conservation benefits.

Consumer Outreach Campaign

The joint *Wild Oceans*/IGFA Take Marlin Off the Menu outreach campaign in 2014 consisted primarily of informing restaurants reported to be serving marlin about the new law, which until a Final Rule is issued by NOAA Fisheries, prohibits sales of marlin and other billfish on the U.S. mainland. Internet searches show a marked reduction in restaurants listing marlin on their menus since passage of the BCA. Meanwhile, we continue to inform the public and consumers of the need for strict regulation of billfish markets.

III. Protect the Prey Base

The *Wild Oceans* Forage First campaign kicked off what has grown into a national environmental priority, preserving the forage base for a wide array of marine predators – fish, marine mammals and seabirds – and we continue to be a leader in this important endeavor. In 2014, we worked on both coasts to implement more conservative management of prey fish that are the target of existing commercial fisheries, put currently un-fished species off limits to new fisheries as a precautionary measure, and develop regional ecosystem plans that emphasize maintaining adequate forage for predators.

Preserve the Ecological Role of Atlantic Menhaden

The focus of our 2014 efforts at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has been three concurrent activities: Implementation of the 20% reduction in coast-wide catch; completion of a new benchmark stock assessment by the end of 2014; and development of ecological reference points to manage the fishery for the future. We expect there will be a re-set of management goals and regulations in 2015 based on these outcomes.

We are happy to report that the 2013 menhaden fishing season turned out to be a banner year for Atlantic menhaden and the many marine animals that live off them. The ASMFC reported in May that landings of menhaden last year were 25% below the total catch

for 2012. What that means is about 250 million of these vital forage fish were left in the water to feed predators like striped bass, bluefin tuna, osprey and whales. The commission, and all its 15-member states, did a good job of keeping the fishery within its first-ever coastal quota.

Throughout the year, we monitored the 2014 Menhaden Stock Assessment Committee, along with the work of the Biological Ecosystem Reference Point Working Group, which is tasked with developing ecological reference points (targets and thresholds) for future management of menhaden.

We are doing our best to keep the ASMFC's Menhaden Management Board focused on the ecological goals they've established for menhaden while awaiting the results of the assessment. Because of our efforts, one of the Terms of Reference for the 2014 Stock Assessment is to *Identify potential ecological reference points that account for Atlantic menhaden's role as a forage fish*. Our briefing paper, **Ecological Reference Points for Forage Species**, a review of the best scientific information available on ERPs, providing copious references to the literature and summarizing what is widely viewed as the "state-of-the-science" on developing ERPs for important prey fish like menhaden, was referred by the Board to its BERP working group.

Conserve the California Current Forage Base

In 2014, the Pacific Council began reviewing pathways for protecting unmanaged and un-fished forage species, the first initiative under its new Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), adopted last year. Prohibiting new fisheries for forage species is part of our larger goal of protecting the overall forage base under the ecosystem plan. We worked throughout the year to make developing a forage status indicator the next FEP initiative.

In March, the Council heard its first Annual Report on the State of the Ecosystem, including preliminary work on developing indicators of forage

health. Prior to the March meeting, we reviewed the indicators contained in the State of the Ecosystem Report, and then testified before the Council, making recommendations for how these indicators could be linked to the Council's decision-making process. The Council agreed that operational objectives will be needed and that work is ongoing.

Stronger Protections for Northeast Forage Fish

In 2014, *Wild Oceans* worked on implementing the first federal bycatch limits for imperiled river herring and shad, which are taken in Northeast mid-water trawl fisheries pursuing sea herring and mackerel.

In February, *Wild Oceans* submitted comments to NOAA Fisheries supporting approval of the first-ever river herring and shad bycatch cap in the mid-Atlantic's offshore mackerel trawl fishery. The cap was approved through Amendment 14 to the Mid-Atlantic Council's Mackerel, Squid & Butterfish Plan, with this year's limit set at 236 metric tons. In our letter, we supported enforcement of the cap while urging NOAA to work with the Council to improve catch monitoring and enforcement, essential to its effectiveness. We also urged them to consider a lower cap in future years.

We are pleased to report that the river herring and shad cap was reduced significantly for 2015 – from 236 to 89 metric tons. For each metric ton reduction in bycatch, an estimated 11,000 river herring and shad will be left in the water to rebuild populations to levels where they can once again fulfill their critical ecological role as prey while supporting valuable in-river fisheries for our coastal communities.

Wild Oceans also submitted comments in July supporting the New England Council's action to cap river herring and shad bycatch in the sea herring fishery. On December 4th, New England's cap was approved by NOAA Fisheries and immediately put into effect.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

MOVING CLOSER TO OUR VISION (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

There were other advances in mid-Atlantic forage fish conservation. The Atlantic mackerel quota was substantially reduced for 2015, reflecting concern about low availability on the east coast, and although butterfly catch limits were set without considering forage needs, we used the butterfly decision to raise the urgent need for guidance, and the Council voted to produce a forage fish “white paper,” which is currently under review.

IV. Preserve Healthy Oceans

The threats posed by overfishing, at both the species and ecosystem levels, are aggravated by the more insidious threat of large-scale changes in marine ecosystems. Probably the most alarming is climate change. We published a feature article in the Spring **Horizon**, entitled [The Quiet Storm: Changing Climate Threatens Ocean Fisheries](#), summarizing the latest studies by NOAA scientists and offering a three-pronged agenda for responding within the fisheries management arena. In 2014, we also became more involved in habitat conservation, specifically protecting deep sea corals and the Sargasso Sea.

Protect Deep Sea Corals

Wild Oceans joined with five other national organizations in May to formally request NOAA’s support for the Mid-Atlantic Council’s plans to be the first federal council to use its discretionary authority to protect deep sea coral communities. The Council’s proposal could cover more than two dozen undersea canyons and more than 39,000 square miles. This ambitious plan would protect these valuable habitats from destructive bottom trawling for the long-term. Public comment followed by the selection of final alternatives to include in the plan is scheduled for early 2015.

Conservation for the Sargasso Sea

Wild Oceans has been a leader in promoting ecosystems approaches to

conserving big fish at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), beginning with protecting habitat in the Sargasso Sea. Due to past resolutions on protecting sargassum, ICCAT’s scientific advisors were charged this year with assessing the importance of the Sargasso Sea to ICCAT managed-species.

In March, the U.S. signed the Hamilton Declaration, a statement of intent to protect the Sargasso Sea from high seas shipping traffic and overfishing.

In April, in our role as a Technical Advisor to the U.S. Commissioners to ICCAT, we initiated the idea of creating an Ecosystems Working Group on the U.S. advisory committee to annually review relevant actions at recent ICCAT meetings, consider research needs to support ecosystem-based fisheries management, and develop recommendations for research and management. Issues that would fall under the purview of such a group would be habitat protection, e.g., the Sargasso Sea, and forage fish conservation. We were invited to present our ideas at the fall advisors meeting.

V. Better Policies, Better Fishing

The challenge of each new reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (MSA), now underway in Congress, is to hold on to the gains of the past while adapting to meet the needs of the future. The current renewal offers an opportunity to advance ecosystems approaches to fisheries management, while maintaining the significant gains in ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted fisheries.

Reauthorizing the MSA

Wild Oceans president Ken Hinman was elected to the executive committee of the re-constituted Marine Fish Conservation Network, an alliance of fishing and environmental

groups we’d co-founded over 20 years ago for the express purpose of strengthening the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). We are working within the Network on its policy platform for reauthorization. The platform we are promoting is: 1) being firm on anti-overfishing and rebuilding mandates, but flexible on the means for achieving them; 2) requiring fishery ecosystem plans; 3) making it a priority to avoid and minimize bycatch; 4) supporting fishing communities.

Congress did not take action on draft MSA amendments in 2014, but debates will resume with the new Congress in January.

Standards for At-Sea Aquaculture

We remain concerned that national environmental standards have not been adopted to protect wild fisheries and marine ecosystems, while pressures to expand open-ocean aquaculture in federal waters of the U.S. increase. We joined with 53 other fishing and conservation organizations in signing a position statement in October declaring that farmed fish should not be labeled “organic” by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, citing unresolved concerns about inputs and outputs into open-ocean systems and use of wild-caught fish as feed. ■

Wild Oceans published and distributed a long list of briefing papers in 2014, helping us win support for our recommendations. Access them all in the [WildOceans.org](#) Library.

- Best Fishing Practices for Bluewater Fisheries (Atlantic)
- Best fishing Practices for West Coast Fisheries
- Performance Criteria for Alternative Gear Research
- Ecological Reference Points for Forage Species
- Intent and the Law: The Billfish Conservation Act
- The Consequences of Allowing Sale of HI-caught Marlin on the U.S. Mainland
- Wild Oceans and the Future of Fishing

Quotas approved for american eel fisheries

On October 27th, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's American Eel Management Board approved a system of quotas to effectively control fishing mortality in a manner that is more responsive to conservation needs. The new measures, known as Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan, constitute the second action developed after a 2012 stock assessment concluded eels were depleted to historic lows. Addendum III, approved in 2013, established a recreational creel limit and minimum size for both recreational and commercial fisheries but did not address pressing issues for young-of-the-year eels, also called glass eels, or for limiting overall commercial catch.

High prices for glass eels, sold to Asian fish farms to be grown to market size, have incited poaching in recent years, making more robust management urgent. Maine, the only state with significant glass eel fisheries, voluntarily established a quota system in 2014 to thwart illegal fishing and regulate landings. Addendum IV requires Maine to maintain its quota system and reduce the quota from 11,749 to 9,688 pounds. However, the approved quota is nearly twice the level recommended by the Board's Technical Committee (TC), a group of scientific advisors.

Commercial fisheries for yellow eels (the intermediate stage in the eel's life cycle) operate in most of the Atlantic states, and Addendum IV establishes a coastwide quota of 907,671 pounds beginning in 2015, 14% higher than the TC recommendation.

In comments submitted in July, *Wild Oceans* supported quotas for both glass eel and yellow eel fisheries, but urged the Management Board to set quotas consistent with scientific advice, stressing the importance of American eels to the Atlantic coast's forage base. While we are disappointed that initial quotas are not sufficiently conservative, establishing the first coastwide catch limits is an important advance in eel conservation. ■

Saving striped bass...again!

“Probably no near-shore fish arouses so much emotion as striped bass,” says writer Dick Russell in his book *Striper Wars*, recalling the long battle to save a fish he calls “the aquatic equivalent of the American bald eagle.” The striper’s status as the premier game fish on the east coast only half explains why so many anglers care so deeply. It’s also the blood, sweat and tears we invested in bringing bass back from the brink of extinction in the 1980s, to a declared “full recovery” in 1995, along with our determination to never let it happen again.

At its Annual Meeting in October, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission listened to concerned anglers – over 4,000 wrote letters or attended hearings - and voted to reduce the catch of stripers by 25% in coastal waters, beginning in 2015, and 20.5% in Chesapeake Bay also starting next year. These actions, part of Addendum IV to the Interstate Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan, were taken to stimulate rebuilding a striper population that has been in decline for nearly a decade and dropping dangerously close to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan’s overfished threshold.

Each of the ASMFC’s 15 member states is tasked with implementing bag and size limits that will achieve a 25% reduction for coastal waters; the default limit is one fish at 28 inches, but a different combination may be approved if it shows a “conservation equivalency.” Commercial quotas will be cut by 25% from the level set in the last plan amendment (2006) in those states that permit commercial fishing.

Wild Oceans submitted written comments in support of a 25% reduction and sent an action alert to our supporters. In addition, President Ken Hinman attended the Commission meeting in Mystic, Connecticut and provided testimony to the importance of this iconic game fish.

No other species has done more to broaden our approach to conserving coastal fisheries than striped bass, he told the Striped Bass Management Board on October 29th. The recovery of striped bass in the 1990s was our first success story,

proving that we can rebuild fisheries if we bite the bullet and showing the way for all other depleted species. The effort to save the striper brought about tangible changes in our laws, strengthening our interstate/federal system for the benefit

of all the coastal migratory species that swim across boundaries. It galvanized thousands of fishermen to join the fight to clean up our bays and protect coastal habitat. And the striper’s link to Atlantic menhaden led to what is today a national movement to conserve all prey or forage species.

Hinman concluded by connecting the dots between conserving striped bass and conserving other ASMFC-managed species, urging the Board to not only adopt a strong Addendum IV but to continue efforts to rebuild menhaden, protect river herring and shad, and develop ecological reference points for these and other associated species. ■

.....
 "When you save this fish, you're not just saving a fish - you're preserving an icon.."

— Ken Hinman

Lines out for bluefin

Five years ago, when NOAA Fisheries announced they were looking for ways to limit the bycatch of Atlantic bluefin tuna on multi-mile longlines, we had some suggestions. In August 2009, *Wild Oceans* recommended a comprehensive conservation program featuring a hard cap on bycatch and new time-area closures. We called it a “cap-and-close” strategy to give fishermen an incentive to use cleaner alternative gears and fishing methods while curtailing the use of indiscriminate longlines, most urgently on the long-depleted bluefin’s Gulf of Mexico spawning grounds.

So we are happy that Amendment 7 to the federal Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan, made final in November, includes

what we consider the key elements of an effective longline bycatch reduction program: a bycatch cap, area closures and enhanced monitoring. (See *table*) If properly implemented and enforced, it should, for the first time, hold the longline fleet accountable for substantially reducing its incidental catch of bluefin tuna.

“The amended plan is a big step forward on a long-standing problem, enacting badly needed measures to reduce longline interactions with bluefin tuna along with innovative ways to hold fishermen accountable,” says *Wild Oceans* president Ken Hinman.

In a recent letter to NOAA Fisheries, we cited our reservations about certain aspects of the plan, most notably

the complex “catch share” program allocating bycatch quotas to individual vessels. We urged the agency to commit to a full review of Amendment 7’s effectiveness in three years time and retain the regulatory flexibility to make whatever changes are needed.

Until then, we will continue to work with NOAA during implementation of the new program so that the hard cap on bycatch and closed areas combine to give longliners a strong incentive to switch to available alternative gears (greenstick for tuna, buoy-gear for swordfish) or adopt cleaner fishing techniques, such as fishing shorter sets with shorter soak times (something we’ve advocated for many years), so that incidentally-caught bluefin and other bycatch can be released alive. ■

New Regulations	Conservation Benefits
<p>Total prohibition on pelagic longline gear when an annual bycatch cap is reached.</p>	<p><i>The new regulations are projected to reduce bycatch</i> by about 44 percent, from a recent average of 247.2 tons a year to a hard cap of 137.2 tons. While we believe that number should be lower, the resulting reduction in longlining effort will provide immediate benefit to bluefin – saving approximately 600 giant tunas a year – and other vulnerable species.</p>
<p>Three new longline closed areas in important feeding and spawning grounds.</p>	<p><i>New modified “Gear Restricted Areas”</i> – one off Cape Hatteras (Dec-April) and two in the Gulf of Mexico (April-May) - prohibit longlining in favor of alternative gears such as tuna green-sticks and swordfish buoy-gear. Better protects concentrations of pre-spawning bluefin and, most importantly, bluefin in the act of spawning. New gulf closure is expected to save from 200 to 300 giant breeders every year.</p> <p>NOAA also decided against allowing conditional access to longlining in areas previously closed to the gear, specifically the Florida East Coast, Charleston Bump, Desoto Canyon and North East Distant areas, acknowledging that they have been crucial to keeping longline bycatch low for a wide range of pelagic species.</p>
<p>Enhanced reporting and monitoring of all longline vessels to enforce new limits.</p>	<p><i>Video cameras required</i> aboard each vessel will supplement mandatory reporting and spotty observer coverage, at the vessel owner’s expense.</p>

Staff travel log

Our recent travels to fight for the future of fishing...

 From September 11-14, Theresa Labriola, *Wild Oceans* West Coast Fisheries Project Director, attended the Pacific Fishery Management Council and its Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Team meetings in **Spokane, Washington**. Theresa testified in support of including unmanaged forage fish in the Council's Fishery Management Plans to prevent new fisheries from developing without scientific information on harvest, sustainability and potential ecological effects. Big fish issues - bluefin tuna conservation and phasing out swordfish drift nets - were also on the agenda. Theresa testified about the need to accurately track not only the number of bluefin tuna caught, but the weight, in order to stay within internationally agreed upon catch limits. Theresa also asked the Council to clearly outline a plan for transitioning the swordfish fishery away from drift nets, including strong interim measures, such as strict bycatch limits (i.e., hard caps), to reduce the catch of non-targeted finfish and endangered marine mammals and turtles. Final action for both unmanaged forage and the swordfish fishery transition plan is expected in March 2015.

 Executive Director Pam Lyons Gromen was in **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** October 7-8 attending the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting. The Council reviewed a first draft of a Forage Fish White Paper that is intended to inform and guide Council actions for managing forage fish in an ecosystem context. Prior to the meeting, *Wild Oceans* submitted recommendations to strengthen the policy document, such as including a clear suite of alternatives for managing targeted mackerel, butterfish and squid stocks to better

protect their role in the food web. The Council agreed to incorporate our suggestions, and a second draft of the white paper will be reviewed in December.



 The U.S. last year supported more formally incorporating ecosystem considerations into the work of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, responsible for tunas, billfish and sharks on the high seas, through an amendment to the ICCAT convention, a move applauded by *Wild Oceans*. On October 9th, President Ken Hinman was invited to **Silver Spring, Maryland** to make a presentation to the U.S. ICCAT advisory committee on the need for a more defined process for acting on ecosystem concerns that impact ICCAT-managed species, including conserving important prey and protecting habitat, including the Sargasso Sea (see *2014 In Review*, p. 6). Also attending was *Wild Oceans* vice chair Rick Weber, a member of the U.S. advisory committee.

 On October 29th, Theresa traveled to **Portland, Oregon** to meet with ocean conservation organizations to discuss plans to protect forage fish in the Pacific and to transition the swordfish fishery away from indiscriminate drift nets.

 Ken Hinman testified before the Striped Bass Management Board at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Annual Meeting on October 29th in **Mystic, Connecticut**. The meeting was held to take final action on new measures to rebuild striped bass, whose numbers have been in decline for nearly a decade. Ken connected the dots between a healthy striped bass fishery and the commission's parallel efforts to rebuild some of the striper's most important prey, including menhaden, river herring and shad. (see also *Saving Striped Bass...Again*, p. 7)

 Theresa attended the Pacific Council and HMS Management Team meetings in **Costa Mesa, California** from November 14-19. Theresa reiterated our concern to the Council that Pacific bluefin tuna bag limits alone will not necessarily reduce annual catch and the Council needs to more accurately track the number of fish caught. The Pacific Council voted to adopt a 2 fish per day limit on Pacific bluefin tuna and to continue to work on better in-season data collection. Theresa also re-stated our concern that the Council's plan to place hard caps on the drift net fishery may not reduce the bycatch of finfish, but will increase management costs. The Council veered off course and changed their plans to end the use of drift nets. (See *Pacific Council Backs Off Plans to End Drift Netting* on p. 3) Finally, Theresa testified before the Council on their decision to adjust the percentage of sardine population harvested each year. Unfortunately, the Council agreed to increase sardine harvest even though the population is constricting. ■

Striped bass & menhaden performance shirt available in our new web site store

Wild Oceans' Protect the Prey Base program began over 15 years ago when we brought attention to the critical link between Atlantic striped bass and their main prey, menhaden, and the need to keep more menhaden in the water as forage. Now striped bass and menhaden are featured in the newest addition to our "It's a Fish-Eat-Fish World" line of apparel. Our new light weight long sleeve T is manufactured by Warbird Fishing Gear and is part of Warbird's Outdoor Technical Performance® (OTP) collection, built specifically for offshore anglers who need protection from the elements during long days on the water.

Features:

- * UV Protection 50+
- * Featherweight
- * Quick Dry
- * Antimicrobial
- * Flex Stretch Fabric



Visit our storefront on WildOceans.org to order. Shipping is free!

10

Your mailing label includes your membership renewal date.



P.O. Box 258
 Waterford, VA 20197
www.wildoceans.org

