



The NCMC

MARINE BULLETIN

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Winter 2013

BRINGING BACK THE BIG FISH

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Billfish Conservation Act the Latest in a Long List of NCMC Achievements

We've always said that fish are wild creatures as magnificent as any animal on earth. And we've likened the big fish – billfish, tunas and sharks – to the lions, tigers and wolves of the sea. Through the years we've grown in our appreciation for their importance as keystone predators, maintaining balance and diversity in marine ecosystems. But although these big fish have few natural predators, they are among the most vulnerable fish in the sea. Man, after all, is the most dangerous predator of all, limited only by the limits we set for ourselves.

We recognize that fishing in wild oceans, where sharks, marlins and tunas roam, requires us to fish conservatively, to avoid indiscriminate gears that harm other species, and to preserve open-ocean habitat and the prey base they need to survive. For the last 40 years, the National Coalition for Marine Conservation (NCMC) has been committed to these goals, a commitment that has produced tangible benefits for the fish and the future of fishing.

Our signature achievement in 2012 was passage of The Billfish Conservation Act. (see page 3) But as the following summary makes clear, it is just the latest in a long list of accomplishments. NCMC has initiated and/or been a driving force behind nearly every major U.S. action to protect and restore billfish, actions that in turn have benefited all big fish.

The Beginning (1973-76)

NCMC co-founder Chris Weld fished extensively for swordfish, bluefin tuna, marlin and sailfish. "Swordfishing on

Nantucket Shoals and Georges Bank made me aware of the tremendously destructive fishery being prosecuted by foreign vessels and the need to establish a 200-mile-limit," he recalls. "At the time there were no conservation organizations dedicated to fishery issues. Along with Frank Carlton and with the encouragement of others, we incorporated NCMC as a non-profit organization. NCMC's first action was to convene the organizers of 40 major fishing tournaments to encourage catch-and-release fishing. Our first two programs focused on bluefin tuna conservation and the establishment of a 200-mile-limit. The former got us involved with ICCAT [Frank was one of the first U.S. Commissioners to the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas] and the second with the drafting of the original Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, which established federal authority to manage and conserve the nation's fishery resources."

Atlantic Billfish Fishery Management Plan (1985-1989)

The federal plan for conserving Atlantic billfish got underway in 1985, with NCMC working to maintain an abundance of blue and white marlin and sailfish for the recreational fishery. The social and economic value of catch-and-release fishing, which far outweighs any commercial value and has a negligible impact on the stock, argued for a unique approach. So did the bycatch of billfish in expanding U.S. longline fisheries and an emerging commercial market for marlin in the U.S. A ban on sale of Atlantic billfish was a must. We recognized that taking away the incentive to target or land billfish for commerce was the most effective tool then

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Plus:

- NCMC is going wild to celebrate our 40th anniversary! Check out our new organization name and logo on page 8.
- See where we've been and what we've been up to on page 7.



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THE VALUE OF SCIENCE

Science cannot teach us what we need most to know about nature, that is, how to value it. - Holmes Rolston

There are three steps in the resolution of an environmental problem. First, of course, we must recognize that a problem exists. Then, we analyze and assess the situation. And finally, we take action to remedy the problem. Or not.

Only the second of these steps calls for objective, unbiased science. It is framed by subjective processes which have more to do with personal values. The decisions we make that affect our environment, then, are ultimately value judgments.

Too often environmental disputes, such as the battle to restore Atlantic menhaden, are characterized as jobs and industry on one side versus the environment of the other. But such disputes are more correctly described as conflicts of values, and the real issue for those of us involved is nothing less than the quality of life - as we perceive it.

"Quality of life" can be defined as the presence in our lives, to whatever degree, of those things we value most. As an environmentalist - and by that I mean someone concerned with maintaining or improving the quality of my environment; human and natural, for to me they are one and the same - I measure the quality of my life in terms of beauty, variety and choice.

A DIMINISHED ENVIRONMENT IS A DIMINISHED LIFE

Beauty is an aesthetic value, one that cannot be justified in words, but is nevertheless something each of us has a unique appreciation for. Variety, too, is an aesthetic value, as it denotes diversity and spontaneity. But it also has a practical value, as it encompasses the interconnectedness of things, the stability of life and insurance against unforeseen, adverse events. Finally, there is choice - the freedom to appreciate beauty or not; to take part in the infinite variety of our existence, or not. The freedom to choose where we want to live and how we wish to live, to in effect construct our own lives out of what is important to us.

The choices we make regarding our environment may, in the views of others, be right or wrong, but they will be made as a result of the personal values we hold. We don't have the right to make these choices for others, but we do have a moral obligation to protect their right to choose and to preserve a broad palette to choose from. Whenever these choices are limited, as in the diminution of one or more parts of our environment, then the quality of our lives - of all of our lives - has been diminished.

If science cannot teach us how to value nature, then we must teach ourselves and each other. As we learn, resolving the conflicts in our values will remain our greatest challenge. For the struggle of man to live in harmony with nature is inseparable from the more intimate struggle of man to live in harmony with man.

-Ken Hinman, *President*

NATIONAL COALITION FOR MARINE CONSERVATION

Founded in 1973

The NCMC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the following 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 coastal habitat and water quality.

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available to conserve them. The no-sale billfish plan became law in 1990, helping protect billfishing for the future.

International Billfish Symposium (1987-89)

The need for greater global cooperation to conserve wide-ranging species of marlin and swordfish, in the face of equally widespread uncertainty as to the health of these fisheries, led NCMC to sponsor an International Billfish Symposium in 1988 in Kona, Hawaii. The historic gathering of the world's foremost billfish authorities attracted 160 scientists, managers, conservationists and fishermen from 15 countries. A total of 60 papers were delivered and discussed during the week-long conference, covering trends in the recreational and commercial fisheries, the current status of billfish populations, research needs and priorities, and management strategies. The very latest studies by scientists from every corner of the globe were presented. We published the papers and panel discussions the following year, two volumes that stood for over a decade as the most complete source of information on billfish. For his work in organizing the five-day conference, NCMC's Ken Hinman was awarded The Billfish Foundation's Conservation Award in November 1988.

Amending the Magnuson Act to Regulate Tuna Fishing (1988-90)

Over our objections, the original Magnuson Act excluded tuna in order to defend U.S. tuna boats invading the waters of other nations. But unregulated fishing for tuna off our shores not only put tuna stocks at risk but also inhibited conservation of other big fish, namely billfish, swordfish and sharks, routinely killed in the tuna longline fisheries off our shores, whether foreign or our own. NCMC initiated a drive to repeal the tuna exclusion and extend to our tuna fisheries the same conservation and management benefits afforded all other fisheries under the Act. We testified before Congress numerous times. In October 1990, the lawmakers made a dramatic reversal in U.S. policy, giving U.S. managers authority to manage tuna and regulate tuna fishing bycatch.

East Coast and Gulf Longline Closures to Minimize Bycatch (1993-2000)

In 2000, the National Marine Fisheries Service enacted federal regulations closing 133,000 square miles of U.S. coastal waters to longlining. The chain of events leading to the longline closures can be traced to 1993, when NCMC co-founded the Marine Fish Conservation Network and successfully passed 1996 amendments to the Magnuson Act making bycatch reduction a new mandate. We exhaustively researched longline controls to minimize bycatch and put forth specific recommendations for closing areas of highest bycatch in our 1998 report, *Ocean Roulette*. When NMFS failed to act, we sued the agency for violating the law and, in a 1999 settlement, secured large closed areas off the southeast coast and in the Gulf of Mexico, closures that reduced bycatch of billfish by up to 75% and are credited

with helping restore swordfish to the east coast.

West Coast Highly Migratory Species FMP (2001-2004)

The impetus for the Pacific Council to develop its first-ever management plan for swordfish, tunas, marlin and sharks off the west coast in 2001 was to introduce a new pelagic longline fishery for swordfish and tuna, superseding a longstanding California state ban on the indiscriminate gear. NCMC marshaled support from other west coast groups and brought in the national Ocean Wildlife Campaign, which we co-founded, to make a federal prohibition on longlining a centerpiece of the plan. Enacted in 2004, the plan included other measures we supported: data collection, restrictions on drift nets, a ban on the sale of striped marlin and catch limits for sharks.

Resolution to Protect Pelagic Sargassum (2000-2005)

NCMC pushed development of a federal Pelagic Sargassum Plan to forestall commercial exploitation of the pelagic brown algae that provides critical habitat for a host of oceanic species on the continental shelf off the southeastern U.S., as well as to strengthen the position of the U.S. in protecting sargassum as essential habitat on the high seas (Sargasso Sea). Working with the South Atlantic Council, we got a U.S. ban on commercial harvest approved in 2004. The next year, NCMC drafted an international resolution to protect sargassum, convinced the U.S. to sponsor it at the 2005 ICCAT meeting, and secured a position on the U.S. ICCAT delegation to shepherd it through the 44-country body.

Take Marlin Off the Menu Campaign (2008-Present)

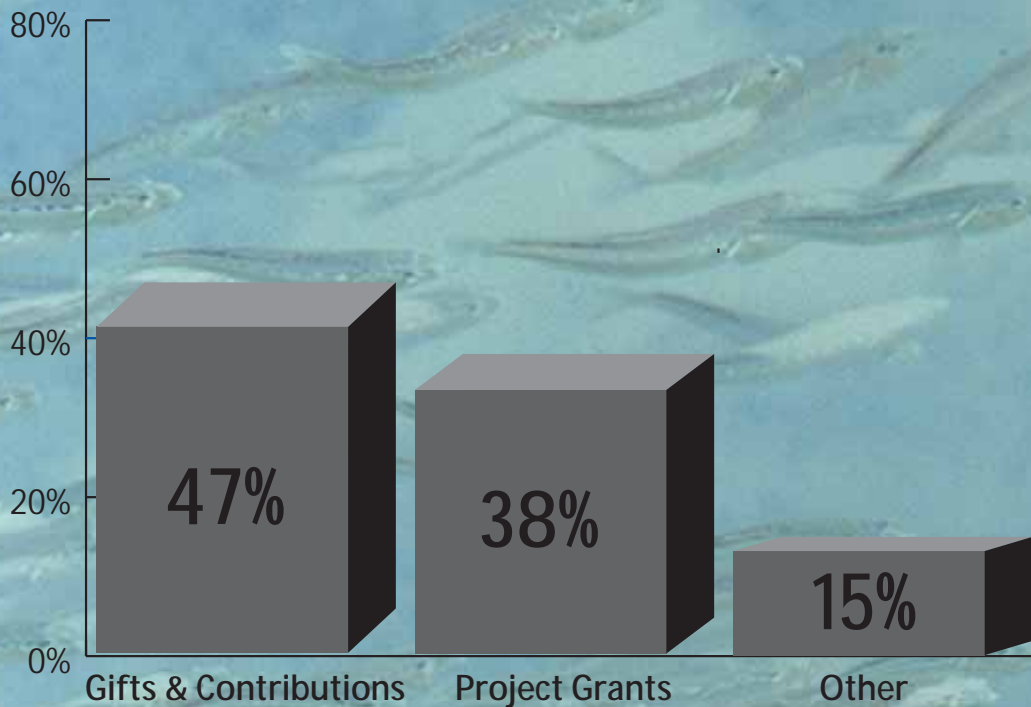
The Take Marlin Off the Menu campaign was launched in 2008 by NCMC, in partnership with IGFA, after we both discovered that the U.S. is the largest importer of billfish in the world. The campaign has informed and educated consumers about the threatened status of marlin worldwide and the dangers of commercial over-exploitation, as we work with restaurants and seafood retailers to take the marlin-free pledge (among them Wegmans Food Stores and chef Wolfgang Puck) and with the compilers of sustainable seafood guides to put marlin on their fish-to-avoid list. Finally, we drafted national legislation to raise awareness to the issue and rally political support in Congress.

Billfish Conservation Act of 2012

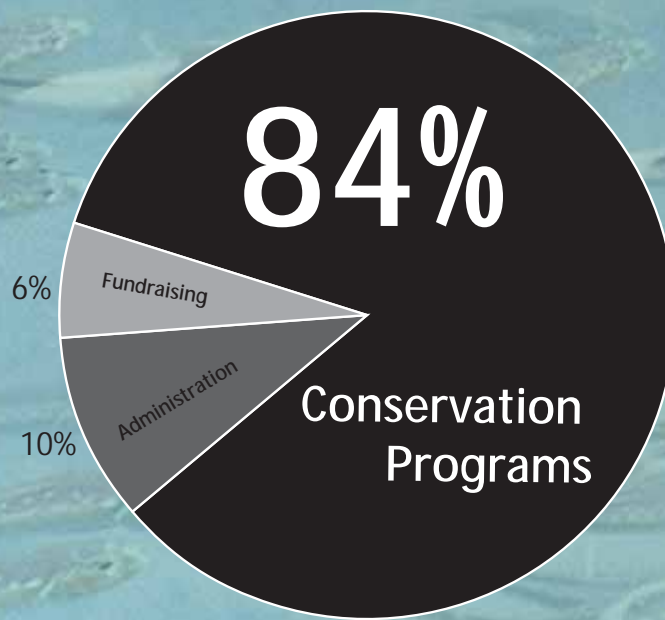
The Billfish Conservation Act of 2012 was signed by President Obama on October 5th. It effectively bans the importation of all billfish into the continental U.S. and is expected to end the sale of an estimated 30,000 marlin a year. It will also help close the black market for Atlantic-caught billfish. The Act marks the culmination of a united undertaking by a diverse coalition of angling and conservation organizations that NCMC and IGFA helped mobilize to work in cooperation with a bipartisan group of congressional champions. For our work in passing the Act, NCMC received the prestigious IGFA Conservation Award. □

2013 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

SOURCES OF REVENUE BY PERCENTAGE



Gifts and contributions were our most significant sources of funding in 2012.



Of the funds we receive, 84% goes directly into our conservation programs!

OCEAN HONOR ROLL 2013

The National Coalition for Marine Conservation gratefully recognizes the following individuals and organizations for their generous support of our work in 2012:

CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS: GRANTS & GIFTS

The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment
Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen Foundation
Firedoll Foundation
Friends of Fish Foundation
Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund
International Light Tackle Tournament Association
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THE FUTURE BRIGHTENS FOR MENHADEN AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

On December 14th, conservation of Atlantic menhaden finally entered the 21st century. A fishery that eluded catch limits for decades, even as menhaden numbers declined, now has a new abundance target that's four (4) times the current population. The coastwide catch has been reduced by 20% from recent levels to get menhaden started on the road to recovery.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission took this historic action through Amendment 2 to the Interstate Menhaden Management Plan, adopted at a special meeting in Baltimore, MD. The purpose of the amendment, approved by a solid majority of the Menhaden Management Board (representatives of 15 east coast states, the National Marine Fisheries and Fish & Wildlife Services), is to increase menhaden abundance and availability as forage. Louis Daniel, chair of the menhaden board, told an audience of about 200 fishermen and environmentalists that they took the action "to address the ecosystem services provided by Atlantic menhaden" as well as "to ensure the long-term sustainability of the resource and the fisheries that depend on it."

"The future of Atlantic menhaden and our coastal ecosystem just got a lot brighter," said National Coalition for Marine Conservation (NCMC) president Ken Hinman. "As we rebuild the menhaden population, we will be providing badly needed food for a long list of wild animals, from striped bass to humpback whales, predators whose supply of prey has dwindled, stifling their ability to sustain healthy numbers."

The coastwide catch allowance for menhaden beginning in 2013 will be 170,800 metric tons, a 20% reduction from the average landings from 2009-2011 and about a 25% reduction from the 2011 catch. In addition, the cap on reduction landings from Chesapeake Bay was extended, reduced also by 20%, to 87,216 MT. A new stock rebuilding target was also adopted, a target population several times the old level to make more forage available for menhaden's many predators. After the next benchmark stock assessment in 2014, the ASMFC will adjust its management measures in order to reach the new target within a designated time period.

NCMC's consistent and insistent presence at the ASMFC over the last ten years, demanding new ecological goals for menhaden and substantial cutbacks in catch to increase the forage base, moved the commission to finally change its management strategy last year while provoking an unprecedented groundswell of public support for menhaden conservation among fishing and environmental groups. Now, with new catch limits being implemented to achieve ecosystem-based goals, our hard work is paying off. Our thanks to all who supported us and worked along with us in this important campaign. □

PACIFIC COUNCIL TO PROTECT FORAGE FISH

At its November meeting in Costa Mesa, CA, the Pacific Fishery Management Council moved forward with an historic Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) for the West Coast. The council regulates fishing in federal waters off California, Oregon and Washington, including for key forage species such as sardine, mackerel, anchovy and squid.

"The new plan will give greater protection to forage fish by prohibiting new fisheries for currently unmanaged species while developing an index of health for the overall forage base to guide future management decisions," said Ken Hinman, president of the National Coalition for Marine Conservation, who testified before the Council.

Highlights of the FEP

- The new plan will be an umbrella document containing policies and information for the council to consider as it manages fishing under its existing fishery management plans.
- An Initiatives or "action" section of the plan, which may be modified and updated as needed, makes prohibiting new fisheries for unmanaged forage fish its first priority initiative.
- A list of core ecosystem indicators will be developed that can be tracked through a State of the Ecosystem Report presented to the council annually. Among these indicators will be the status of the overall forage base.
- A section will be added to the FEP to link actions to the status indicators.

"In the simplest terms, what the FEP will provide the council is a context for making smarter management decisions," said Hinman. "It will be a tool for applying established ecosystem principles throughout the management process, with a means for holding the council accountable for achieving its ecosystem goals."

A final vote to approve the FEP is expected to take place at the April Pacific Council meeting, and public support will be important for a successful outcome. Follow this issue and learn how to weigh in by joining NCMC's Email Action Alert at www.savethefish.org. □



A log of where we have traveled to fight for the fish in the last quarter...

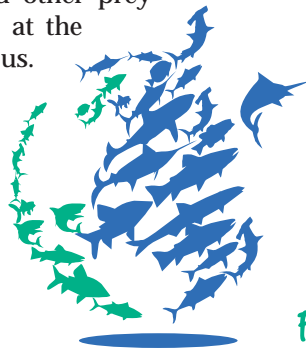
- ✦ Executive Director Pam Lyons Gromen participated in the final four meetings of the Mid-Atlantic Council's Visioning and Strategic Planning Working Group held in **Annapolis, MD** on September 21st, **Long Branch, NJ** on October 15-16, and **Baltimore, MD** on November 12th and December 10-11. Using the products developed by the working group, a 10-year strategic plan will be created to advance goals in key areas, including public engagement and communication, governance, social and economic considerations, science and data, ecosystems, regulatory process and council decision-making. The draft strategic plan is expected to be released for public review and comment this year.
- ✦ NCMC president Ken Hinman, a member of the Advisory Committee to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, attended a meeting October 17-18 in **Silver Spring, MD** to provide advice to the U.S. Commissioners for the November ICCAT meeting in Agadir, Morocco. He urged the U.S. to seek stronger protections for Atlantic marlins and sailfish by strengthening the current billfish rebuilding program and to follow the latest scientific advice and hold the line at current catch levels for both the eastern and western stocks of Atlantic bluefin tuna, which are showing signs of rebuilding. The U.S. Delegation was successful in maintaining current limits on Atlantic-wide fishing for bluefin and securing catch reductions for marlins. A proposal backed by NCMC to ban international trade in billfish was circulated by the U.S. but did not receive enough support to be adopted.
- ✦ Pam traveled to **Philadelphia, PA** for the October 22nd meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Shad & River Herring Management Board, where the Board approved a plan for a 5% river herring bycatch allowance for federal vessels landing in Rhode Island. A river herring moratorium for in-state fisheries has been in place in Rhode Island since 2006 to address a precipitous drop in run counts. However, mid-water pair trawling for sea herring, which captures river herring as bycatch, continues in state ocean waters up to the shoreline.
- ✦ Ken and Pam attended a strategy meeting in **Washington, DC** on October 24th to coordinate with other fishing and conservation groups on building public and political support for menhaden conservation.
- ✦ On November 6-7, Ken attended a meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council in **Costa Mesa, CA** to testify on the council's developing West Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan, which the council plans to implement in 2013. (See story on page 6.) He also discussed with council and NMFS staff future plans for moving to alternative commercial fishing gears for swordfish and phasing out drift nets and longlines.
- ✦ Pam was invited to take part in the first Mid-Atlantic Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) which was held November 27-29 in **Baltimore, MD**. The workshop provided an overview of the scientific processes involved in fisheries management and featured prominent speakers from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center.
- ✦ A member of the ASMFC's Menhaden Advisory Panel, Ken attended the panel's November 19th meeting in **Hanover, MD**. The panel of commercial, recreational and environmental stakeholders reviewed Draft Amendment 2 and made recommendations to the commission.
- ✦ At the Mid-Atlantic Council meeting on December 12th in **Baltimore, MD**, Pam was on hand for the review of public comments received during scoping for Amendment 15 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (MSB FMP). Over 47,000 individuals and dozens of organizations weighed in to support adding river herring and shad to the FMP to afford these imperiled forage fish federal management protection. Pam testified at one of the four scoping hearings held in November and provided detailed written comments for the development of alternatives.
- ✦ On December 11th Ken met with Eric Schwaab, NOAA Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management, in **Washington, DC** to discuss NOAA's positions for the upcoming meeting of the ASMFC Menhaden Management Board.
- ✦ The ASMFC met in **Baltimore, MD** on December 14th. Both Ken and Pam attended for NCMC. The commission adopted a new recovery plan for Atlantic menhaden, taking effect in 2013 with the first limits on the coastwide catch, 20% below recent levels. (See story on page 6.)



NCMC CELEBRATES 40 YEARS BY GOING WILD NEW NAME AND LOGO UNVEILED

For 40 years, the National Coalition for Marine Conservation has been bringing people together to make sure there will always be plenty of fish in the sea. Whether you enjoy fishing or simply love the ocean, you've benefited from our long history of accomplishments. We built an unprecedented network of ocean stakeholders to strengthen federal law to end overfishing and restore depleted populations of fish. We played a leading role in the recovery of once-endangered species like striped bass and swordfish. We closed large areas of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts to drift nets and longlines, saving many thousands of threatened billfish, sharks and sea turtles from this deadly gear. We energized a national movement to protect menhaden, herring and other prey fish, the foundation for all life at the top of the food chain, including us.

Founded by anglers in 1973, and 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. Our programs emphasize conserving the ocean's top predators - the big billfish, swordfish, tunas and sharks that are the lions and tigers of the sea - while preserving healthy ocean food webs and critical habitats essential to the survival of all fish, marine mammals and seabirds.

In 2013, we will celebrate our 40th anniversary by launching a new, state-of-the-art web site to re-introduce ourselves as **Wild Oceans...for the future of fishing.**

It's a name that sums up our mission - to keep the oceans wild to preserve fishing opportunities for the future. It's simple and easy to remember, and better reflects who we are, what we do, and why it matters. As **Wild Oceans**, we will meet new challenges with renewed vigor - for the fish, the wild world we share, and the future of fishing. Stay tuned. □

Your mailing label now includes your membership renewal date.

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