



The NCMC

MARINE BULLETIN

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BILLFISH 'THREATENED', CONGRESS RE-ACTS

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New Study Says World's Marlins in Jeopardy; House & Senate Re-Introduce Billfish Conservation Act

Although marlin and other billfish are among the biggest and fastest fish in the sea, top predators with little to fear from other predators, they are among the most threatened. Commercial overfishing has reduced their populations worldwide to only a fraction of what they were just decades ago. According to a recent global assessment by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), three species of billfish are endangered.

The IUCN, which maintains the well-respected Red List of Threatened Species, in early July classified blue marlin and white marlin as "vulnerable" to extinction, while striped marlin was assessed as "near threatened." The blue marlin is found throughout the world's oceans. The white marlin is found only in the Atlantic while its close cousin, the striped marlin, is indigenous to the Pacific.

"This is the first time that fishery scientists, ichthyologists and conservationists have come together to jointly produce an assessment of the threats facing (billfish)," says Dr. Bruce Collette, a Senior Scientist with the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service, Chair of the IUCN's Tuna and Billfish Specialist Group and a lead author of the study.

The key to recovery of billfish and other red-listed species is to reduce commercial fishing pressure, says the IUCN. The global decline of billfish populations is the result of overfishing by non-U.S. commercial fleets who harvest marlin, sailfish and spearfish as bycatch while targeting other species with indiscriminate longlines. The U.S. prohibits almost all commercial fishing for billfish and has closed many offshore areas to longline

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Plus:

- See page 5 for the latest on NCMC's recent travels.
- Visit page 7 to learn how you can help us Take Marlin Off the Menu!

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NO TIPPING, PLEASE

There comes an affair in the tides of men," wrote poet Pete Brown, riffing on Shakespeare, "when you can't go back again."

A tipping point is that decisive event that leads to irreversible, life-altering change. On land, one such point occurred at the beginning of the 20th Century, with the end of large-scale market hunting and commercial trade in wildlife. Human demands had outstripped the ability of wild animal populations to meet them. Many species already had been depleted or eliminated. When it came to feeding the nation, farming and ranching filled the gap, claiming more and more of the landscape for agriculture, denying these areas to wildlife forever.

Though the early 20th Century saw the birth of wildlife conservation, mid-wived by ethical sportsmen intent on preserving wild animals and their habitat, recreational hunting and fishing have become increasingly marginalized. Space for wildlife is shrinking, as are the opportunities for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. An estimated 1.5 million acres of wildlife habitat are lost every year to development and sprawl, according to the Izaak Walton League. About a million of those acres are turned into farms and ranchland.

We may be approaching a tipping point at sea, with similar consequences for wildlife and fishing.

In "The Future of Fish", the cover story in a recent issue of Time magazine, author Bryan Walsh sets the stage:

worldwide catches of wild fish hit the ceiling in the mid-1990s, with a third of fish stocks still depleted or overexploited; global per capita consumption of fish has increased 75% in the last 50 years; and the world's population continues to grow exponentially. There is a huge gap between supply and demand, and that gap is being filled by aquaculture. Today half the seafood consumed comes from fish farms.

Both the demand for food from the sea and the capacity to satisfy it, through aquaculture, are expected to increase into the foreseeable future. What that will mean for wild stocks of fish, for marine wildlife in general, hasn't really been considered, beyond the naïve notion that somehow it will relieve the pressure to overfish.

Most tipping points are reached without a decision actually being made. Grandiose schemes of ocean governance designed to "balance competing interests," such as fishing, aquaculture, oil drilling, wind and wave energy, are not a substitute for a vision for the future of our oceans. "Marine spatial planning" and the like are nothing more than land-use planning taken offshore.

We've warned of the environmental costs of large-scale offshore aquaculture numerous times in these pages. We've proposed minimum standards for protecting the wild ocean, but so far they've fallen on deaf ears. Fish farming isn't a big industry here, so most Americans don't know what it would mean, what would change, irreversibly.

So much of what we love about the sea, about fish, about fishing, is in the wildness. Let's be clear where we are at this point in history and what's at stake. The assumption underlying our modern scale economies is constant growth, in production and demand. If we apply this assumption to the oceans, we will destroy them.

-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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ASMFC MAKES HISTORIC MOVE TO RESTORE MENHADEN

If you care about menhaden, striped bass, bluefish, bluefin tuna, osprey and other seabirds, whales, the health of east coast estuaries like Chesapeake Bay, or the future of Atlantic fisheries in general, you now have an opportunity to support conservation measures that would restore menhaden to its rightful place as “the most important fish in the sea.”

On August 2nd, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) voted to send a range of options for rebuilding menhaden out for public comment. Draft Addendum V to the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan, approved by an overwhelming majority at the 15-state commission’s summer meeting, raises the overfishing threshold while proposing new rebuilding targets, all of which will increase menhaden abundance.

The public will have an opportunity to weigh in on these so-called “reference points” at hearings all along the east coast this fall, as well as through written comments. The ASMFC will formally adopt the new population targets and fishing limits in November, after which it will develop appropriate management measures, e.g., quotas and allocations, for review in early 2012.

“It’s an historic moment and it’s been a long time coming,” says Ken Hinman, president of the National Coalition for Marine Conservation (NCMC). “Finally, the ASMFC is recommending strong action to end years of

depletion, action that will revive the heartbeat of the east coast food web.”

Hinman testified for NCMC at the August meeting in Alexandria, Virginia, after working for months with commissioners and the Menhaden Plan Development Team to include conservative rebuilding targets as options in the draft addendum. (See “[Aim High](#),” NCMC Marine Bulletin No. 132)

The addendum sets a new overfishing threshold of 15% of the spawning potential of an unfished population (or MSP), which is about double the current threshold. Years of heavy exploitation, primarily by the reduction fishery operated by Virginia-based Omega Protein, have reduced the menhaden population’s productivity to a dangerously low 8% of its potential, according to the 2010 stock assessment. Most importantly, the addendum proposes that management measures be implemented to achieve target population levels of either 20%, 30% or 40%MSP, with the higher targets more in line with the minimum standards set for other key forage fish.

“The public now has a chance to give its support to the most conservative rebuilding options being considered,” says Hinman. “An opportunity like this, one that could have such far reaching effects for so many species, doesn’t come along often.” □

Take Action for Menhaden!

The public comment period for Addendum V is now open until 5:00 EST on November 2nd. There are **two** important ways that you can take action for menhaden.

1 Send an email to the ASMFC, to the attention of Toni Kerns, tkerns@asmfc.org. Include “Menhaden Draft Addendum V” in your subject line. Use the sample text we have provided here, or submit your own unique letter!

Dear Commissioner,

I commend the ASMFC for acting to increase abundance of Atlantic menhaden, which will benefit many other species and dependent fisheries along the east coast.

I support adoption of a new overfishing **Threshold, Option 2**, a level corresponding to 15% of menhaden’s maximum spawning potential (MSP).

I strongly urge the ASMFC to manage the fishery to a new target that is safely above the threshold, significantly increases abundance, and takes into account menhaden’s ecological role as a forage fish.

Target Option 3, a fishing level corresponding to 30% MSP, **should be the minimum** target for rebuilding menhaden, since it is a standard measure for a sustainable fishery.

But because of menhaden’s enormous value to the Atlantic ecosystem, **I support Target Option 4**. Maintaining at least 40% MSP is the accepted target reference point for forage fish like menhaden.

The ASMFC should move as swiftly as possible to develop management options effective for managing menhaden to the new target.

Sincerely,

Name, Address, City, State, Zip Code

2 Attend a Hearing!

From September through October the ASMFC will be hosting public hearings on Addendum V in nearly all of the Atlantic coast states. This is another important opportunity to voice your support for new reference points that account for menhaden’s role as prey.

A copy of Addendum V and the up-to-date hearing schedule can be found on the ASMFC web site under “Public Input.”

<http://www.asmfc.org/publicinput.htm>

FISHERY SCIENCE ACT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

The Fishery Science Improvement Act of 2011 was introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives in June. The bill arises from dissatisfaction with the 2006 Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act's requirement that regional councils establish annual catch limits (or ACLs) for all stocks under management by the end of this year. Most if not all councils are ready to meet that deadline. But a number of recreational fishing groups are unhappy with the limits being set for some species, saying the science doesn't exist to justify them or that the Magnuson Act requirement is forcing unfair closures when annual limits are reached.

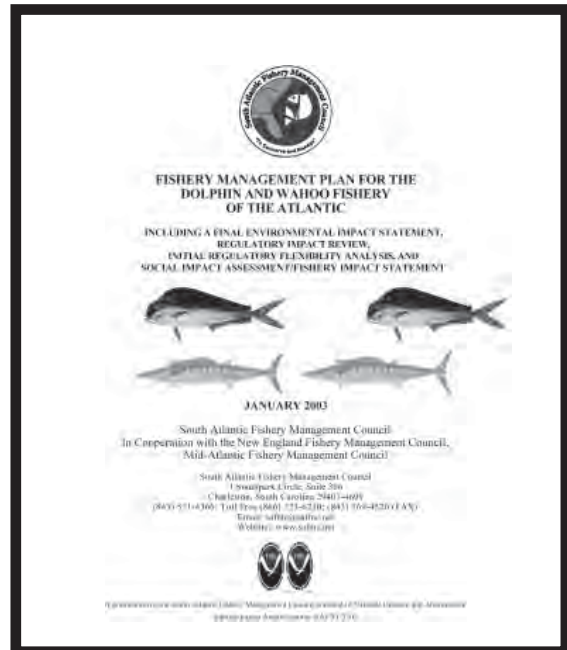
What the bill (HR 2304) would do is exempt fisheries from the requirement to establish annual catch limits if a) there is not a recent peer-reviewed stock assessment for that fishery, and b) the National Marine Fisheries Service has not determined that overfishing is occurring. The bill would also extend the deadline for implementing the ACL requirement through 2014.

What the bill does not do is require NMFS to improve its science or provide the needed incentives, although the bill's stated purpose is "to provide the necessary scientific information to properly implement annual catch limits." The bill does not authorize any new money for stock assessments or even data collection, the latter being the number one obstacle to accurately assessing a fish stock's condition. The only stock assessments mandated are for fisheries that are designated as overfished without one, a rare event indeed. Worse, a stock assessment done after the legislation passes would not count in the determination of whether or not a fishery should be exempted from the ACL requirement. That's some incentive for new science.

Well-intended legislation that attempts to remedy problems in a few fisheries with a broad brush that would be applied to all, like the Fishery Science Improvement Act, can have unintended consequences. What will be the effect of a law that exempts, not just fisheries, but fishery sectors (commercial as well as recreational), from annual catch limits? Regardless of intent, such a blanket exemption could be used to obstruct all kinds of restrictions.

A number of fishery management plans the National Coalition for Marine Conservation worked hard to implement - with our primary motivation being to protect healthy fisheries from unregulated commercial expansion - may not have been possible under the Fishery Science Improvement Act as presently written.

The Dolphin/Wahoo FMP of 2003, for instance, placed an annual catch limit on commercial fishing, in the absence of a stock assessment, in order to prevent new commercial fisheries from targeting dolphin and harming a thriving recreational fishery. The Atlantic Billfish FMP of 1990 banned all commercial fishing (ACL=0), with no stock

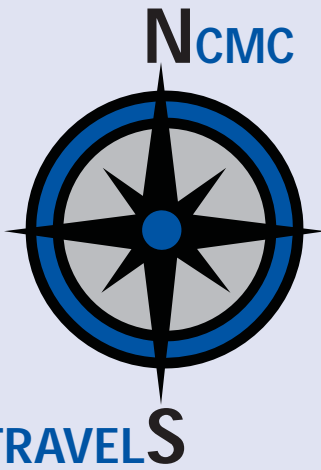


The Atlantic Dolphin Plan, enacted without a stock assessment, saved a thriving recreational fishery from commercial expansion and overfishing.

assessment and no evidence of overfishing, to preserve a highly valuable sport fishery. The Sargassum FMP of 2003 set a miniscule annual quota, unsupported by any stock assessment, to protect this essential fish habitat from commercial exploitation. The Atlantic Shark Plan of 1993 imposed the first annual catch limits on commercial fishing for 11 large coastal species, even though data were so poor they could only be assessed as a complex, not individually.

In each case, fishery managers were being proactive, at the behest of recreational anglers, in order to prevent overfishing. It is critical, therefore, that any attempt to link the setting of annual catch limits to peer-reviewed stock assessments and evidence of overfishing does not deny fishery managers the discretion to identify a potential threat to a healthy fishery and then take pre-emptive action. It's a precautionary tool that's served us well in the past.

Finally, the bill unwisely exempts from catch limits any non-target stock that is not overfished. In other words, an annual catch limit, such as a bycatch cap, could not be set for species such as river herring and shad that are caught in federally-managed industrial trawl fisheries. River herring and shad are currently managed by the states so have not been designated "overfished" under the Magnuson Act, despite the fact that these critical forage species are so depleted a petition was filed this summer to list river herring under the Endangered Species Act. □



TRAVELS

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

- ✦ Executive Director Pam Lyons Gromen traveled to **Baltimore, Maryland** on May 25th where the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (MAFMC) Scientific and Statistical Committee convened to develop catch level recommendations for Atlantic mackerel, longfin squid, shortfin squid and butterfish - species that comprise an important part of the Northeast's forage base.
- ✦ President Ken Hinman attended meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management Council June 9-11 in **Spokane, Washington**, where the Council agreed to begin work on a Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the California Current. NCMC submitted written comments which were included in the council's briefing book, and Hinman participated in the June 9-10 Ecosystem Plan Development Team meeting and the June 11th council session where the plan was adopted.
- ✦ On June 14th and 15th, Pam attended the MAFMC meeting in **Port Jefferson, New York** where the Council agreed to take steps to improve the process of considering ecological information when setting catch levels. At the same meeting, 2012 quotas were selected for Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish, with a number of stakeholders expressing concern for the mackerel stock. Landings during the 2011 mackerel season amounted to less than 1% of the quota.
- ✦ In June, Ken visited with numerous Members of Congress and/or staff at their offices in **Washington, D.C.** to discuss the need to prohibit the sale of billfish in the United States. He was joined by representatives of the IGFA, NCMC's partner in the Take Marlin Off the Menu campaign. (see story page 1)
- ✦ The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Menhaden Plan Development Team met on June 16th in **Arlington, Virginia** to draft an Addendum to increase menhaden abundance and availability as a forage species. Ken attended and participated in discussions about options for achieving the commission's goals.
- ✦ Ken testified at the August 2nd meeting of the ASMFC's Menhaden Management Board in **Alexandria, Virginia**, where he presented a scientific paper linking poor recruitment (production of juvenile fish) over the past two decades to the condition of the menhaden spawning stock and how an increase in spawning stock with a more balanced age structure would substantially improve the chances for good recruitment events in the future. The commission approved Addendum V, including a number of rebuilding options, for public comment. (see story page 3)
- ✦ Pam was selected to serve on the MAFMC's new Visioning Project Advisory Panel, which held its first meeting in **Baltimore, Maryland** on August 3rd. The Visioning Project seeks to engage stakeholders in creating a vision for Mid-Atlantic fisheries that informs the Council's management plans. With stakeholder input, a strategic plan will be developed and implemented to achieve the vision.
- ✦ As Chair of the ASMFC's Shad & River Herring Advisory Panel (AP), Pam participated in the August 3rd meeting of the ASMFC's Shad & River Herring Management Board in **Alexandria, Virginia**. She delivered the AP's recommendations for monitoring and reducing bycatch of river herring and shad in Mid-Atlantic Council managed fisheries and for furthering cooperative efforts between the ASMFC and federal councils to restore river herring and shad populations.
- ✦ The ASMFC's River Herring Stock Assessment Subcommittee met in **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** August 8-10. Pam was on-hand to contribute to the discussion and was pleased with the effort and attention placed on ocean bycatch data and analyses.
- ✦ Pam traveled to **Wilmington, Delaware** to attend the MAFMC meeting on August 16th and 17th. Dr. Jason Link, the Chair of the Ecosystems Subcommittee of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, presented a proposal for incorporating forage considerations into catch-setting, including a comprehensive definition of "forage fish."

SUSTAINABLE FISHING FOR BLUEFIN AND OTHER BIG FISH

The bycatch of Atlantic bluefin tuna by longliners, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico, has been a long-standing problem. Longline hooks set for yellowfin tuna and swordfish capture large numbers of breeding-age bluefin, most of which are discarded. The National Coalition for Marine Conservation is working to modify or eliminate the use of indiscriminate longlines to protect bluefin as well as billfish, sharks and other large pelagic fish, and transition to more selective, sustainable methods of fishing.

We've been putting constant pressure on the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to reduce longline bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico, the western bluefin's only known spawning ground. This pressure produced a new rule this spring requiring the use of so-called "weak hooks," basically standard circle hooks made of a thinner gauge. Experiments show some promise of lowering bycatch if the giant tunas can straighten the hooks and escape, but the research is preliminary and there is not enough reason to believe weak hooks alone will provide the level of protection needed to conserve the remnant breeding population.

NCMC's focus on longline bycatch recently prompted NMFS to announce it will undertake a review of its domestic bluefin tuna management policies to address discards of dead bluefin and the best ways to reduce unintended catch, with an emphasis on the Gulf. During this review, NCMC will continue to urge NMFS - as we did in a paper submitted to the agency in February - to institute a cap on the allowable bycatch in the gulf and a closure of the longline fishery during spawning season. A combination of a hard cap on longline bycatch and a 3-month closure during the height of bluefin spawning activity would maximize protection for breeding bluefin. It would allow longliners to fish most of the year with an incentive to modify their gear, for example by fishing shorter lines and/or sets to allow more bycatch to be released alive, or to switch to more selective alternatives such as green sticks for yellowfin tuna and buoy gear for swordfish.

NCMC was invited to participate in a Gulf of Mexico Alternative Gear Workshop at the Harte Research Institute in Corpus Christi, Texas in April. The workshop was devoted to exploring more selective and sustainable alternatives to fishing with longlines. Commercial fishermen using green stick and buoy gear were in attendance. One likely outcome of this meeting will be a demonstration fishery in the gulf to promote a gear change among longline fishermen there.

The NCMC is also researching and writing an updated version of our influential 1998 report, OCEAN ROULETTE. The new report, tentatively titled GEARING UP: *The Transition from Indiscriminate Longlining to More Selective, Sustainable Fishing*, will be used to advocate for cleaner commercial fisheries for tuna and swordfish in the face of repeated attempts by the longline industry to re-open closed areas on both the east and west coasts. □

FORAGE FIRST!

Recent Developments in the Science and Management of Forage Fish

- ➔ **The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) released draft guidance for sustainability certification of forage fisheries on May 3rd, which is based on a groundbreaking study funded by the MSC and recently published in *Science*.** The guidance sets forth criteria for identifying forage fish, and clarifies the importance of maintaining these fish at abundance levels well above those associated with traditional fishing targets, ideally 75% of an unfished level. NCMC joined with other groups in submitting comments in support of the new guidance while also providing recommendations for further improvements, a number of which were adopted. The guidance was implemented on August 15th.
- ➔ **On August 1st, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) filed a petition to list alewife and blueback herring (collectively referred to as river herring) as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.** The petition explains, "Today, what was a vital part of both our Atlantic coastal ecosystems and cultural heritage has nearly disappeared. A fishery that dates back at least 350 years has declined almost 99 percent over the last fifty." The recovery plan sought by NRDC includes addressing ocean bycatch in mid-water trawl fisheries.
- ➔ **The ASMFC's Shad & River Herring Management Board convened on August 3rd to review the status of sustainable fishery plans submitted by states that plan to keep river herring fisheries open after January 1, 2012.** Nearly all Mid-Atlantic states will be closing their fisheries: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and North Carolina have already enacted state-wide moratoriums and those will remain in effect. Sustainable fishery plans have been approved for Maine, New Hampshire and South Carolina, and for a very small research fishery in North Carolina. New York intends to submit a plan for approval before the January 1st deadline.
- ➔ **A new study conducted by researchers from NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center and published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* found that haddock predation on Atlantic sea herring eggs can significantly impact the herring population.** To prevent population crashes, herring must be maintained above a threshold that can withstand both haddock predation on eggs and fishing pressure. The study emphasizes the importance of incorporating ecological interactions such as predation into stock assessment models. □

BILLFISH 'THREATENED', CONGRESS RE-ACTS

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gear. Recreational anglers here in the U.S. release nearly all the fish they catch and have modified their gear and fishing techniques to ensure every released fish survives.

But an estimated 30,000 foreign-caught marlin are imported for sale in the United States every year, according to the Take Marlin Off the Menu campaign, a joint project of the National Coalition for Marine Conservation and the International Game Fish Association. In order to close this loophole in our billfish conservation efforts, Congress is considering federal legislation to prohibit the sale of billfish in the U.S.

THE BILLFISH CONSERVATION ACT OF 2011

On July 29th, a bipartisan group of senators and congressmen teamed up to introduce The Billfish Conservation Act of 2011 to protect these magnificent fish from overfishing and better position the U.S. to seek the long-overdue recovery of billfish through stronger international conservation measures.

"The Billfish Conservation Act makes it clear that the future of billfish is not for sale," said Ken Hinman, president of NCMC. "Hats off to the bi-partisan co-sponsors of this important legislation for making sure there will always be plenty of billfish in the sea, for this and future generations."

The legislation, H.R. 2706, was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representatives Jeff Miller (R-FL), Mike Ross (D-AR), Bob Latta (R-OH), Heath Shuler (D-NC), Rob Wittman (R-VA), Jeff Duncan (R-SC), Michael Michaud (D-ME), Jo Bonner (R-AL), and Dan Boren (D-OK). In the Senate, the legislation (S. 1451) was introduced by Senators David Vitter (R-LA), Bill Nelson (D-FL), John McCain (R-AZ) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

The bill, similar to legislation introduced in 2010, would prohibit the sale of all billfish - marlin, sailfish and spearfish - in the U.S., however, it would allow for traditional fisheries within the State of Hawaii and the Pacific island territories. Swordfish are not included in the prohibition.

For nearly two decades, the U.S. has had a ban on the sale of Atlantic-caught billfish, yet no such ban exists for Pacific-caught billfish, note the bill's sponsors. This Pacific Ocean loophole also creates a black market for Atlantic-caught billfish because there is no way to effectively enforce the distinction. Other countries continue to sell billfish in the U.S. through this loophole. The Billfish Conservation Act of 2011 closes that loophole, potentially saving thousands of rare marlins a year.

Restoring billfish populations, say the bill's Republican and Democratic sponsors, will also improve recreational fishing opportunities here in the U.S., where fishing for billfish is almost entirely catch-and-release, playing a positive economic role in generating jobs without harming the resource.

What you can do to help today!

- Visit the Keep America Fishing Action Center to send a message to your Members of Congress, urging their support for the Billfish Conservation Act of 2011. (<http://keepamericafishing.org/action> - Click on "National Issues" and from there select, "Conserving the Magnificent Billfish.")
- Spread the word about The Billfish Conservation Act and our Take Marlin Off the Menu Campaign.
- Make a special donation to Take Marlin Off the Menu. (http://www.takemarlinoffthemenu.org/Donate_Now) Your donation will immediately be put to good use:
 - Building support for The Billfish Conservation Act among U.S. policymakers;
 - Educating the American public and consumers about the threat to billfish;
 - Involving chefs, restaurants, and seafood vendors to voluntarily remove marlin at U.S. restaurants and supermarkets;
 - Promoting conservation of billfish on U.S. delegations to Regional Fishery Management Organizations.



"The Billfish Conservation Act is win-win legislation for the environment and the economy," says NCMC's Hinman. "Marlin, sailfish and spearfish are some of the world's most majestic marine fish. They are apex predators that play a critical role in maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems."

"Billfish are also highly esteemed by recreational anglers the world over," adds Rob Kramer, president of the IGFA. "Catch-and-release fisheries for these species support many marine jobs and generate billions of dollars to the U.S. economy."

The sale of billfish in the U.S. contributes very little to our commercial fishing industry, on the other hand. Billfish account for just 0.07% of the total annual revenue from all commercial fishing. There are many sustainable alternatives for restaurants and retailers to offer in place of billfish, which is why many restaurants are already voluntarily taking marlin off their menus. □



FACTS ABOUT THE BILLFISH CONSERVATION ACT OF 2011

What is the Billfish Problem?

- ▶ Billfish populations (marlin, sailfish and spearfish) are severely depleted and are in need of greater protection in international fisheries management.
- White marlin has declined by as much as 90%.
- Striped marlin has declined by as much as 52%.
- Blue marlin has declined by as much as 65%.
- Sailfish has markedly declined, though data are uncertain.
- ▶ Billfish, which are highly migratory, are depleted because of commercial overfishing by *other countries*.

Why Take Further Action in the U.S.?

- ▶ The United States recognized the billfish problem in the Atlantic 22 years ago and tried to reverse this trend by banning the commercial harvest and sale of Atlantic-caught billfish.
- ▶ With the exception of striped marlin caught off the west coast, there is no similar ban on the sale of Pacific billfish.
- ▶ The U.S. ban on the sale of Atlantic-caught billfish is undermined by a black market created by the Pacific-caught loophole.
- ▶ There are no U.S. commercial fisheries targeting billfish, but U.S. imports are a serious problem contributing to overfishing.


▶ **The U.S. is the largest importer of billfish in the world!**

- ▶ U.S. billfish imports are approximately 1,335 metric tons annually. That's about 30,000 billfish!
- ▶ The top five exporters of billfish to the U.S. are: Costa Rica, Ecuador, Vietnam, South Korea and the Philippines.
- ▶ Banning the sale of Pacific-caught billfish in the continental U.S. will effectively end the importation of all billfish, and eliminate a sizeable market for exporting countries.
- ▶ Eliminating that market will help bring back billfish. It will also strengthen the U.S. push for international conservation measures.

Will Banning The Sale of Billfish in The Continental U.S. Be Good for The U.S. Economy?

- ▶ The U.S. recreational fishing industry generates billions of dollars of marine-related jobs and sales, from a fishery where virtually all billfish are released alive.
- ▶ Restoring billfish populations will improve recreational fishing opportunities both in the U.S. and abroad, and that creates jobs and sales for U.S. boat and gear manufacturers, and U.S. marina and sports-fishing industries.
- ▶ Eliminating billfish sales in the continental U.S. will not have negative impacts because the U.S. seafood market is highly elastic and consumers can readily switch to other species. □

Your mailing label now includes your membership renewal date.



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