

Fish Stocks in Rebuilding Plans: A Trend Analysis

Introduction

When a stock is determined to be overfished, the Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) must implement a plan to rebuild the stock to the biomass level that can produce the maximum sustainable yield.

Rebuilding a stock will generally occur if more fish survive to maturity than are lost to mortality. Thus, it is important to set catch levels at a rate that will appropriately constrain mortality from fishing and allow stocks to rebuild. Sometimes, factors such as habitat loss, environmental variability, and disease outbreaks hamper rebuilding efforts and stocks do not rebuild as expected. In most cases, if fishing mortality is kept within the levels specified in the rebuilding plan, the stock should rebuild as expected. Some stocks are in subsequent rebuilding plans because they failed to rebuild under their first rebuilding plan(s). Subsequent rebuilding plans are noted in Table 1 and the rebuilding trends graphs.

Rebuilding Categories of the Trends Analysis

Using the most recent stock assessment, stocks were reviewed and grouped into rebuilding categories based on the level of fishing mortality (F) compared to the overfishing level (rebuilding categories 1 and 2 below), and the general trend in biomass (B) (rebuilding categories 3 and 4 below):

- 1) The most recent year's estimate of F or catch is below the overfishing level (not subject to overfishing).
- 2) The most recent year's estimate of F or catch is above the overfishing level (subject to overfishing).
- 3) The biomass has increased since the rebuilding plan was implemented,
- 4) The biomass has decreased or there is no substantial increasing trend since the rebuilding plan was implemented.

Inclusion of a stock in the "biomass increasing" category does not necessarily mean that the stock is rebuilding at the rate that is expected in the rebuilding plan.

Results

As of December 31, 2018, there were 52 stocks in need of rebuilding or that were rebuilt over the previous year. Of these 52 stocks, 38 stocks are currently in rebuilding plans, ten stocks are required to have a rebuilding plan implemented within two years of Council notification/concurrence of stock status by the AA (for Atlantic HMS stocks), and one stock completed rebuilding under a rebuilding plan over the past year. The remaining three stocks do not require rebuilding plans under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), but are pursuing recovery under the Endangered Species Act or international measures. All of these stocks are listed in Table 1, which indicates which stocks were included in the trend analysis, and an explanation if

they were not included. Some stocks may be in rebuilding plans but not included in the analysis for the following reasons:

- 1) A formal rebuilding program was not submitted under the Magnuson-Stevens Act¹.
- 2) The stock has been recently declared overfished, so a rebuilding plan has not yet been implemented.
- 3) Overfishing status is unknown and most recent overfished status is not based on quantitative stock assessment.
- 4) The stock is in a rebuilding plan, but does not have reliable time series estimates of biomass and/or fishing mortality.
- 5) The stock is in a rebuilding plan, but the most recent stock assessment does not yet include a full year under the plan.
- 6) Stock does not require a domestic rebuilding plan under section 304(i) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act because status is due to excessive international fishing pressure; NMFS is working internationally to rebuild this stock.
- 7) There are multiple time series of biomass and fishing mortality trends, none of which are a preferred alternative.

A total of 27 stocks were included in the trend analysis and are grouped into one of the four rebuilding categories described above, and listed by region in Table 2.

The percentage of stocks in each rebuilding category is as follows:

- 1) Not Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Increasing – 37%
- 2) Not Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Not Increasing – 33%
- 3) Subject to Overfishing/Biomass Increasing – 4%
- 4) Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Not Increasing – 26%

Table 3 also lists which of the 27 stocks included in the trend analysis are currently in which rebuilding category.

¹ Applicable to Atlantic salmon only - a Final Recovery Plan for the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic Salmon has been developed under the Endangered Species Act.

Table 1. Stocks in Need of Rebuilding or Rebuilt in 2018 (as of December 31, 2018)

Stock	Jurisdiction	Current Rebuilding Program Progress	Status in Analysis
GREATER ATLANTIC REGION			
American plaice - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank	NEFMC	5/10-year plan Second rebuilding plan	Included
Atlantic cod - Georges Bank	NEFMC	15/23-year plan	Included
Atlantic cod - Gulf of Maine	NEFMC	5/10-year plan Second rebuilding plan	Included
Atlantic halibut - Northwestern Atlantic Coast	NEFMC	15/52-year plan	Included
Atlantic salmon - Gulf of Maine	NEFMC	N/A	Excluded - 1
Atlantic wolffish - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank	NEFMC	Year 9 of plan	Included
Ocean pout - Northwestern Atlantic Coast	NEFMC	15/10-year plan	Included
Red hake - Southern Georges Bank / Mid-Atlantic	NEFMC	N/A	Excluded - 2
Smooth skate - Gulf of Maine	NEFMC	Rebuilt	Included
Thorny skate - Gulf of Maine	NEFMC	16 of 25-year plan	Included
White hake - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank	NEFMC	15/10-year plan	Included
Windowpane - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank	NEFMC	9/7-year plan	Included
Winter flounder - Georges Bank	NEFMC	9/7-year plan	Included
Winter flounder - Southern New England / Mid-Atlantic	NEFMC	6/10-year plan Second rebuilding plan	Included
Witch flounder - Northwestern Atlantic Coast	NEFMC	9/7-year plan	Excluded - 3
Yellowtail flounder - Cape Cod / Gulf of Maine	NEFMC	15/19-year plan	Included
Yellowtail flounder - Georges Bank	NEFMC	13/26-year plan	Included
Yellowtail Flounder - Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic	NEFMC	N/A	Excluded - 2
SOUTHEAST REGION			
Goliath grouper – Caribbean	CFMC	14/30-year plan	Excluded – 4
Gray triggerfish – Gulf of Mexico	GMFMC	1/8-year plan Second rebuilding plan	Included
Greater amberjack – Gulf of Mexico	GMFMC	2/10-year plan Third rebuilding plan	Included
Nassau grouper – Caribbean	CFMC	14/25-year plan	Excluded – 4
Hogfish - Southeast Florida	SAFMC	2/10-year plan	Excluded - 5
Queen conch – Caribbean	CFMC	14/15-year plan	Excluded – 4
Red grouper - Southern Atlantic Coast	SAFMC	9/10-year plan	Included
Red porgy - Southern Atlantic Coast	SAFMC	20/18-year plan	Included
Red snapper - Gulf of Mexico	GMFMC	17/31-year plan Second rebuilding plan	Included
Red snapper – South Atlantic	SAFMC	9/35-year plan	Included
Snowy grouper - Southern Atlantic Coast	SAFMC	13/34-year plan	Included
WEST COAST REGION			
Cowcod - Southern California	PFMC	18/19-year plan	Included
Pacific bluefin tuna – Pacific	PFMC / WPFMC	N/A	Excluded - 6
Yelloweye rockfish - Pacific Coast	PFMC	15/25-year plan	Included
PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION			
Seamount Groundfish Complex - Hancock Seamount	WPFMC	Year 33 of plan	Excluded – 4
Striped marlin - Central Western - Pacific	PFMC / WPFMC	N/A	Excluded - 6

Stock	Jurisdiction	Current Rebuilding Program Progress	Status in Analysis
ALASKA REGION			
Blue King Crab - Pribilof Islands	NPFMC	Year 4 of plan Second rebuilding plan	Included
HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES			
Bigeye tuna – Atlantic	HMS	Year 20 of plan	Excluded – 7
Blacknose shark – Atlantic	HMS	6/30-year plan	Excluded – 5
Blue marlin – North Atlantic	HMS	Year 18 of plan	Included
Dusky shark – Atlantic	HMS	11/100-year plan	Included
Porbeagle shark – Atlantic	HMS	11/100-year plan	Excluded – 5
Sailfish – Western Atlantic	HMS	Year 20 of plan	Excluded – 4
Sandbar shark – Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico	HMS	14/66-year plan	Included
Scalloped hammerhead – Atlantic	HMS	6/10-year plan	Excluded – 5
Shortfin mako – North Atlantic	HMS	N/A	Excluded – 2
White marlin – North Atlantic	HMS	Year 18 of plan	Excluded – 4

Table 2. Stocks Included within Trends Analysis by Rebuilding Category - Regional and Cumulative Percentages

Stock	Not Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Increasing	Not Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Not Increasing	Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Increasing	Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Not Increasing
American plaice - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank	√			
Atlantic cod - Georges Bank				√
Atlantic cod - Gulf of Maine				√
Atlantic halibut – Northwestern Atlantic Coast		√		
Atlantic wolffish - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank	√			
Ocean pout - Northwestern Atlantic Coast		√		
Smooth skate – Gulf of Maine	√			
Thorny skate - Gulf of Maine		√		
White hake - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank	√			
Windowpane - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank		√		
Winter flounder – Georges Bank		√		
Winter flounder - Southern New England / Mid-Atlantic		√		
Yellowtail flounder - Cape Cod / Gulf of Maine				√
Yellowtail flounder - Georges Bank				√
Greater Atlantic Region Percentage of Stocks in Category	28%	43%	-	29%
Gray triggerfish – Gulf of Mexico		√		
Greater amberjack – Gulf of Mexico	√			
Red grouper - Southern Atlantic Coast				√
Red porgy - Southern Atlantic Coast	√			
Red snapper – Gulf of Mexico	√			
Red snapper – Southern Atlantic Coast			√	
Snowy grouper - Southern Atlantic Coast	√			
Southeast Region Percentage of Stocks in Category	58%	14%	14%	14%

Stock	Not Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Increasing	Not Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Not Increasing	Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Increasing	Subject to Overfishing/ Biomass Not Increasing
Cowcod - Southern California	√			
Yelloweye rockfish - Pacific Coast	√			
West Coast Region Percentage of Stocks in Category	100%	-	-	-
Blue king crab – Pribilof Islands		√		
Alaska Region Percentage of Stocks in Category	-	100%		-
Blue Marlin – Atlantic				√
Dusky Shark – Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico				√
Sandbar Shark – Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico		√		
Highly Migratory Species Division Percentage of Stocks in Category	-	33%	-	67%
National Totals				
Percentage of Stocks in Category	37%	33%	4%	26%

Table 3. Rebuilding stocks quadrant

	Not Subject to Overfishing	Subject to Overfishing
Biomass Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American plaice - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank • Atlantic wolffish - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank • Cowcod - Southern California • Greater amberjack - Gulf of Mexico • Red porgy - Southern Atlantic Coast • Red snapper – Gulf of Mexico • Smooth skate – Gulf of Maine • Snowy grouper - Southern Atlantic Coast • White hake - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank • Yelloweye rockfish - Pacific Coast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red snapper – Southern Atlantic Coast
Biomass Not increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic halibut - Northwestern Atlantic Coast • Blue king crab – Pribilof Islands • Gray Triggerfish - Gulf of Mexico • Ocean pout - Northwestern Atlantic Coast • Sandbar Shark – Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico • Thorny skate - Gulf of Maine • Windowpane - Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank • Winter flounder - Georges Bank • Winter Flounder – Southern New England / Mid–Atlantic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic cod – Georges Bank • Atlantic cod - Gulf of Maine • Blue marlin – Atlantic • Dusky Shark – Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico • Red grouper - Southern Atlantic Coast • Yellowtail flounder - Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine • Yellowtail Flounder - Georges Bank