

MISSION AND MANDATES

NOAA Fisheries is responsible for the stewardship of the nation's ocean resources and their habitat. We provide vital services for the nation, which ensure: productive and sustainable fisheries, safe sources of seafood, the recovery and conservation of protected resources, and healthy ecosystems—all backed by sound science and an ecosystem-based approach to management.

The Southeast Region boasts diverse habitats that support the largest saltwater recreational fishery in the United States, the second largest commercial fishery by volume, and a multi-billion dollar scuba diving and marine ecotourism industry. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) stipulates that fisheries shall be regulated so as to achieve the optimum yield, particularly with respect to food production and recreational opportunities, while preventing overfishing and taking into account the protection of habitat and marine ecosystems. The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA), are aimed at conserving marine mammals, sea turtles, and other protected species such as corals, sturgeon, and smalltooth sawfish. The Federal Power Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and other federal statutes also support these fishery and protected species objectives.

The Southeast Regional Office and Southeast Fisheries Science Center work together with many other NOAA offices and agencies to balance these competing objectives and maintain thriving ocean ecosystems. Key internal partners include the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, NOAA Fisheries Office of Sustainable Fisheries' Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Division and the Office of Habitat Conservation's Restoration Center.

Key external partners include the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils), the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel, the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas,

Federal and state agencies, commercial and recreational fishermen, national and regional aquaculture associations, foundations, domestic and international non-governmental organizations, academia, and other stakeholders.

We work closely with the Councils, HMS Advisory Panel, and state and international partners to develop and implement new and innovative ways to increase fishing opportunities while achieving our conservation mandates. Working with these partners, the Southeast Region has significantly reduced the number of fish stocks subject to overfishing and increased the number of rebuilt stocks through implementation of annual catch limits, stock rebuilding plans, and other measures, including habitat conservation and restoration.

The NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat conservation is an important partner in the Southeast Region for conducting restoration and habitat conservation activities. We restore degraded or injured habitat by removing dams and other barriers, reconnecting coastal wetlands, and rebuilding coral and oyster reefs to ensure fish have access to high quality areas.

We work with the NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources to conserve over 90 stocks of marine mammals and sea turtles, as well as numerous corals and other species; protecting their habitats, protecting them from detrimental human activities, and monitoring activities that might impact them

We also conduct extensive data collection programs in collaboration with states, and provide stock assessments and ecological and socioeconomic information required for the management of federal and international fisheries and essential fish habitat.

The Southeast Region also seeks to grow domestic marine aquaculture production, supplementing U.S. wild-caught fisheries while promoting business and employment opportunities. We accomplish this by working closely with federal and state partners to support regional industry initiatives, including development of the first pilot and commercial-scale finfish operations in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

The NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement, in partnership with states, territories, and other Federal agencies, conducts compliance assistance, and enforcement activities to ensure the success of our regulatory efforts.

In partnership with industry and consumer groups, we work to increase consumer confidence in seafood by ensuring safe, wholesome, and properly labeled seafood through inspection, law enforcement, and international cooperation.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Reflecting the vision of the Department of Commerce and NOAA to *Help the American Economy Grow*, our three Strategic Goals for 2020-23 are to:

- ***Amplify the economic value of sustainable commercial and recreational fisheries***
- ***Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development***
- ***Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency***