



Rebounding Haddock Populations Offer Hope For Fishermen, Food For Discussion At International Symposium In Portsmouth Oct. 25 - 26

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Reporters/editors: Members of the media are welcome to attend this symposium. Please contact Laurinda Sousa Smith for more information or to register.

PORTSMOUTH, N.H. – Gone are the days in which fish populations were thought to be limitless, but that doesn't mean hope for healthy stocks for the future has vanished.

Overfishing has been a common problem for New England fish populations, particularly for groundfish species such as cod, haddock and flounder. However, since the new millennium, New England has experienced a rebound in the populations of haddock, with total landings valued at more than \$100 million since 2001.

"Haddock have shown very good signs of population recovery over the past five years," explains Pingguo He, University of New Hampshire research associate professor in the Ocean Process Analysis Lab and NH Sea Grant extension specialist. "We think of them as an economically important species so we want to learn how they can be sustainably utilized without harming populations of haddock and other species."

Researchers and fishermen from both sides of the Atlantic want to ensure that rebounding haddock populations are here to stay. Strict fishing regulations have helped the comeback of the species, but now efforts are being made to allow fishermen to capitalize on the economic opportunities as well.

A two-day symposium titled "Haddock 2007: An International Symposium on Haddock Conservation, Harvesting and Management" will take place at the Portsmouth Sheraton Harborside on October 25-26. This symposium, which is hosted by UNH, was organized by a team of researchers from New England and Canada. It will allow researchers from the U.S. to learn from other countries that are ahead in terms of fisheries management issues, explains Ken La Valley, NH Sea Grant extension specialist. Scientists from countries including Canada, Norway and Scotland are expected to attend.

Symposium attendees will be able to learn about haddock-related topics from the two keynote speakers, Clem Wardle and Bob O'Boyle. Wardle is a world-renowned scientist from Scotland who helped pioneer the idea of using fish behavior to help design more selective gear. O'Boyle, associate director of Canada's Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Maritime Branch in Nova Scotia, specializes in marine fisheries stock assessment and will be speaking about haddock in both contemporary and historical times.

"This symposium will also allow us to discuss what we know about haddock, including their life history and movement patterns," La Valley says. "We want to be forward-thinking and protect haddock populations. We don't want to make the same mistakes as before and overfish the species."

Because haddock occupy the same habitat as other overfished species, including cod and flounder, regional scientists have been designing different fishing gear to separate haddock from these other species to decrease bycatch.

Field trials of new fishing gear aimed at targeting haddock can be affected by many factors in nature that aren't easily accounted for, He explains. What works in the northeast U.S. must be proven to also work in other countries before the gear can be approved for commercial use. Bringing researchers and fishermen together in this symposium will also allow them to discuss, evaluate and compare the new gear designs to see what works and what needs further development.

Regardless of what country each researcher is from, the goal is the same — to balance healthy haddock populations with suitable harvesting limits.

"We want to learn from the past by using research that's been conducted in recent years," La Valley adds.

Sponsors for this symposium include NH Sea Grant, Rhode Island Sea Grant, Northeast Consortium, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries and NOAA/NMFS Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program.

New England fishermen are also encouraged to attend the symposium and there are a limited number of registration fee waivers and stipends for compensation.

For more information regarding the 2007 International Haddock Symposium, please contact Laurinda Sousa Smith at 603.862.0136 or laurinda.smith@unh.edu or visit <http://www.seagrant.unh.edu/haddock.html>.

