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UNH Fisheries Expert Says "Stay The Course" With Ocean Fish Recovery Policy In *Science* Article

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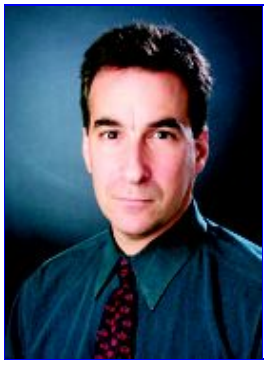
DURHAM, N.H. -- In a strongly worded defense of existing, embattled U.S. legislation aimed at ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted populations within the next decade, scientists write in the July 29 issue of *Science* that altering current policy would be misguided and counterproductive.



Andrew Rosenberg

The article's authors state that the United States took the lead role in rebuilding fish populations through passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996. According to the article, the United States has numerous marine species whose recovering populations are linked to federal rebuilding mandates. And yet, some recent legal decisions and congressional proposals would relax or eliminate the law's recovery mandates.

The article, whose lead author is Carl Safina of the Marine Sciences Research Center at Stony Brook University, shows "quantitatively that the existing timetable is responsible, reasonable, and biologically feasible."

Scientist Andrew Rosenberg of the University of New Hampshire and the article's second author, is the former Northeast Regional Administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service. In that capacity, Rosenberg was responsible for calling many of the shots as scientists and the government began to grapple with the devastating collapse of Atlantic Ocean fishing stocks.

According to Rosenberg, professor of natural resources at the UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space, the recovery of populations of scallops, haddock and other groundfish is "unequivocally" the result of the federal government having imposed severe restrictions.

The authors point out that some commercial fishing interests and members of Congress have attacked the current law's 10-year time frame for rebuilding depleted fish populations as "too rigid, aggressive, and arbitrary." However, the 10-year window, they claim, is both reasonable and scientifically sound.

"Ten years (twice the time the majority of populations require for rebuilding) was chosen to avoid Draconian mandates; to help ensure that managers actually commence rebuilding; to increase chances for success; and to minimize future ecological, social and economic costs. This optimizing balance was deliberate and compassionate, not arbitrary," the authors stress.

"In sum," the article states, "the longer managers allow overfishing, the more depletion undermines subpopulations, diversity, resilience, and adaptability, risks ecosystem structure and functioning, reduces chances for eventual recovery, and raises social and economic costs."