



Eastern Fisheries

Sustainability Report

Fishery Management

SCALLOPS:

Management of the U.S. Atlantic Scallop Fishery has been very effective. The New England Fishery Management Council manages the Atlantic Sea Scallop in cooperation with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council under the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fisheries Management Plan (FMP), which was first implemented in 1982. Several critical practices, which include gear restrictions, closed areas, limits on days-at-sea, and on-board observers have protected the U.S. scallop fishery so that it remains a sustainable and well-managed fishery.

FLATFISH:

The implementation of Amendment-80 effectively ended the “race for fish,” increasing retention (95% of fish caught, are kept) and significantly reducing the amount of naturally occurring bycatch. This act created a catch-share program that allocates a quota to each vessel for the year. Quotas may be shared or sold but the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) from the Bering Sea must not be exceeded. Fish stocks are maintained by setting the TAC at or below the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC), or amount of fish that could be harvested to continue a sustainable fishery.

O’Hara Corporation is responsible for their own target catch and bycatch allocation. If the total allocation of any species is reached, fishing stops. This provides a strong incentive for their Captains to keep bycatch low and to fish in a responsible manner.

Two federal fisheries observers work onboard each of the O’Hara vessels throughout the fishing season. They collect scientific information that is used to monitor catch levels and protect fisheries resources.

COD:

Alaskan longline cod is harvested in both the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands regions. Fishing for Alaska FAS Cod by the longliner fleet is divided by applicable regulations into two seasons; season A begins January 1 and ends June 10th (or when the season quota is harvested) and season B starts June 10 and runs until B season is harvested or December 31.

Under the private cooperative fishing agreement among the companies that own freezer longliners, each company owns a percentage of the total harvest quota allocated by the NMFS to the fleet. With this quota system, fishing vessels do not need to race for harvests, resulting in a safer, more stable fishery.

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Gear

TRAWL: FLATFISH & IQF COD

In cooperation with the Alaskan Co-op and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Eastern Fisheries and co-founder O'Hara Corporation implemented the latest in towing technology reducing the impact on the seafloor.

RAISED TRAWL SWEEPS: Spaced ninety feet apart, lightweight round disks raise the trawl sweeps off the seafloor greatly reducing the amount of gear that touches the bottom by 90%.

Mid-Water Trawl Doors have changed the outdated practice of letting the doors drag through the mud. New doors ride in the mid-water reducing bottom contact.

DREDGE: SCALLOPS

The scallop dredge modification requires a "mat" across the dredge opening, made from both horizontal and vertical chains that are spaced widely enough to allow scallops to enter, but closely enough to prevent turtles from entering the bags.

Properly configured mats will now be required on all sea scallop dredges used by federal permit holders fishing in the mid-Atlantic from May 1 until November 30, when sea turtles are most likely to be in the area where sea scallopers are operating. Dredge ring size is regulated to 4" to allow smaller, juvenile scallops to pass through.

BOTTOM LONGLINE: COD

Seabirds can be particularly vulnerable during the setting of the longline. Bottom longline modifications have greatly reduced mortality rates for seabirds. Mitigation techniques include the use of weights to ensure the lines sink quickly and the deployment of streamer lines to scare away birds. In Alaska, streamer lines have reduced incidental catches of seabirds by 90%. Other modifications include setting lines only at night in low light (to avoid attracting birds), limiting fishing seasons to the southern winter (when most seabirds are not feeding young), and using whole fish as bait and not discharging the remains of fish while setting lines.

In 2004, gear modification, particularly a change to large circle-hooks and mackerel-type baits, eliminated much of the sea turtle by-catch associated with the longline fishing technique.

🌀 Sustainability Pledge 🌀

Eastern Fisheries, Inc., is committed to providing our customers with sustainable seafood – seafood that is protected from being overfished through regulated fishery management programs and to harvest our fish using safe fishing practices to minimize damage to our marine environment.