


COMMUNITY VOICE

Why U.S. Fisheries Are A Global Model Of Sustainability

Management and conservation laws in place now for four decades benefit the Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific Ocean.

ABOUT 9 HOURS AGO · By Michael Tosatto 

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In the 40 years since passage of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, we've been on a journey that has made U.S. fisheries management a global model of sustainability. In the Pacific Islands, we see the wisdom of this act on our dinner plates and in our local fisheries every day.

In our region, much credit goes to the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, which is responsible for recommending conservation and management measures to NOAA Fisheries in the Pacific Islands. Comprised of commercial and non-commercial fishermen, and environmental, academic and government interests, the council has a proud track record of achieving its goal of sustainable fisheries.

Within the Councils' expansive jurisdiction – extending from the Hawaiian Islands through the Western Pacific including American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam – only a small number of stocks are subject to overfishing or overfished.



Federal law protecting fisheries has enabled 39 U.S. fish stocks to be rebuilt over the past 16 years.

Working closely with the Western Pacific Council and state, territory, and commonwealth governments, NOAA has provided development assistance, marine education and training opportunities to ensure sustainable marine resource management now and into the future.

One popular and distinct initiative gives students from elementary through high school the chance to learn about marine science through a multi-disciplinary curriculum. This effort bolsters interest in marine-related careers, advances environmental stewardship and generates understanding about why an ecosystem approach to management is so vital.

Fisheries' successes stretch way beyond the Pacific Islands. Since 2000, 39 U.S. fish stocks have been rebuilt. In 2014, U.S. commercial fishermen landed 9.5 billion pounds of fish, valued at \$5.4 billion. And just recently, an evaluation of fisheries management under Magnuson-

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consumers can be confident about the sustainability of fish and shellfish harvested in the Pacific Islands and across the country.

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Since counting fish can be harder than you might think, NOAA scientists use satellite-based and other technologies to ensure that management of the Pacific Islands' unique and highly migratory species rests on the best available information. Satellite data, for example, strengthen understanding of the food web that supports ecologically and commercially important species such as yellowfin tuna, swordfish, North Pacific albacore, and neon flying squid. Numerous scientific disciplines are engaged in monitoring and assessing the status of fish stocks and the viability of regional fishery management plans.

Under a science-based framework, the U.S. is able to bring national influence to international marine resource management bodies such as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, leading by example to ensure that shared marine resources are responsibly managed. The councils and international organizations are putting NOAA science to work by reducing bycatch and managing fisheries using a holistic ecosystem-based approach.

There are challenges ahead, including climate change, bycatch and habitat destruction. But the commitment to science-based management and technological innovation that permits our Western Pacific Council and the seven other U.S. regional fishery councils to assess fish stocks enable us to address such challenges collaboratively and creatively.

Whether you enjoy casting a line from a local pier, or eating seafood at your favorite restaurant, sustainable fisheries are everyone's business. Working with the regional councils, fishing industries and coastal communities, Magnuson-Stevens offers a proven roadmap for successful fisheries management. It's definitely benefited the Pacific Islands region. I look forward to another 40 years!

For more details including fish stocks in the Pacific Islands and updates on exciting projects, please visit www.fpir.noaa.gov.

Community Voices aims to encourage broad discussion on many topics of community interest. It's kind of a cross between Letters to the Editor and op-eds. This is your space to talk about important issues or interesting people who are making a difference in our world. Columns generally run about 800 words (yes, they can be shorter or longer) and we need a photo of the author and a bio. We welcome video commentary and other multimedia formats. Send to news@civilbeat.com.

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