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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2015

U.S. fisheries continue to rebuild; overfishing and overfished numbers at all-time lows

The number of domestic fish stocks listed as overfished or subject to overfishing has dropped to an all-time low since 1997, when NOAA began tracking stock status, according to the 2014 *Status of U.S. Fisheries* report to Congress.

The report, produced annually since 1997, highlights the United States' continued progress towards sustainably managing fish stocks. This progress is a result of the combined efforts of NOAA Fisheries, the regional fishery management councils, the fishing industry, and other partners.

Six stocks--snowy grouper on the southern Atlantic coast; North Atlantic albacore; haddock in the Gulf of Maine; gag grouper in the South Atlantic; the Jacks complex in the Gulf of Mexico; and, Bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic--were removed from the overfishing list. Two stocks were no longer listed as overfished--gag grouper in the Gulf of Mexico, and North Atlantic albacore, which was removed from both lists.

A stock is on the overfishing list when the annual catch rate is too high. A stock is on the overfished list when the population size of a stock is too low, whether because of fishing or other causes.

"This report illustrates that the science-based management process under the Magnuson-Stevens Act is working to end overfishing and rebuild stocks," said Eileen Sobeck, assistant NOAA administrator for fisheries. "While we have made tremendous progress, we know there's more work to be done -- especially as we continue to document changes to our world's oceans and ecosystems. We will continue to strive toward sustainable management of our nation's fisheries in order to preserve our oceans for future generations."

The report also finds that three more fish stocks: Gulf of Maine/Cape Hatteras butterfish; Gulf of Mexico gag grouper; and, Mid-Atlantic Coast golden tilefish were rebuilt to target levels in 2014, bringing the total number of rebuilt U.S. marine fish stocks to 37 since 2000.

"Our agency wants to let consumers know that the United States' global leadership in responsible fisheries and sustainable seafood is paying off," Sobeck said. "We are moving forward more than ever with efforts to replicate and export stewardship practices internationally. As a result of the combined efforts of NOAA Fisheries, the regional fishery management councils, and all of our partners, the number of stocks listed as subject to overfishing or overfished continues to decline and is at an all-time low."

To read the full *2014 Status of U.S. Fisheries* report, find fish stock status information, and learn more about U.S. fisheries management, go to the NOAA Fisheries website:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/news/2015/status_of_stocks_2014.html

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