

Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance



The Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance's mission is to restore and enhance an enduring marine system supporting a healthy diversity and an abundance of marine life and human uses through a self-organizing and self-governing organization. For the past decade, we have set the standard for effective collaboration in the pursuit of one question: if we truly care about the health of our oceans does it matter how, where and when we fish; and, who catches the fish that end up on our dinner plates?



Habitat for Fisheries

We all know what habitat is. It's our surroundings -- our homes and our communities. It includes what we need to help keep our families healthy and safe. For some of us, habitat may include both a home and a place of work. And for those who commute between them, habitat includes transportation corridors -- perhaps a car or bus on roads, a train on tracks, or a bicycle on designated paths. Habitat also includes the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat to sustain our lives.

So it is for fish and other sealife. For instance, adult cod live on the ocean bottom, but their eggs float near the surface, and different life stages of developing cod can be found distributed at different water depths. And fish often migrate to different habitats for reproduction and to feed. To support a cod or other fish, shellfish, mammal, sea turtle, or sea bird, a variety of marine habitats in good condition are needed along with safe corridors to pass between them.

Marine habitats have been severely degraded by pollution from near and far; by abundant trash; by physical damage from dredging, drilling, and dragging; by lost or discarded fishing gear; and by overfishing. Nearshore habitats and estuaries have been further damaged by coastal development, both industrial and residential.

But all hope is not lost. We can reverse the trend and protect marine habitat for future generations.

For more information please visit www.namanet.org

Marine food web:

- Ecosystems have a biological structure that is largely defined by feeding relationships -- who eats whom. A healthy ecosystem is held together by its food webs (relationships that tend to look something like a spider web). Sadly many stressed ecosystems are mere ghosts of what they once were, and their food webs have become more like cobwebs.
- Interruptions in food webs can occur when overfishing changes the balance of species or non-fishing stresses such as climate change cause some species to decline or disappear. When this happens, ecosystems become biologically impoverished and less stable. Pressures on one species can cause others to decline as well, and the fabric of biodiversity changes color or fades.
- We are especially concerned about overfishing on species that form the base of critical food chains -- forage fish, such as a variety of herring species upon which cod, tuna, whales, porpoises, sea birds and other species depend on.
- Herring have long been fished at low levels with small scale and/or stationary gear to satisfy sardine canneries and bait needs for lobster and recreational fisheries. But now they are fished at industrial scales for industrial uses such as fishmeal and fish oil.
- To restore healthy populations of the numerous commercial fisheries species that have declined, there must be a constant adequate supply of forage fish to support their increased growth.



How we are working to improve marine habitat and food webs:

- NAMA supports all efforts to improve marine habitat quality for the benefit of coastal ecosystems and fisheries. We work with fishermen who are stewards, not wasters, of the ocean to improve fisheries practices and infrastructure and to achieve better ecosystem-based management and habitat protection for the benefit of commercial fisheries, fishing communities, and regional food systems.
- NAMA is also working for management policies and actions that will rebuild and maintain food webs and recover healthy ecosystems that support healthy populations of commercially valuable fish.

What can you do?

- Fight chemical pollution wherever you live; it all ends up in the sea. The culprits are: industrial processes and products, sewage treatment outfalls, manufactured fertilizers, agricultural pesticides, household cleaners, lawn care, power plants, pharmaceuticals, automobiles and oil.
- Support fishing regulations that that support healthy marine ecosystems (i.e. ecosystem-based rather than species-by-species regulations); restrict take of fish critical to marine food chains (forage fish); and de-industrialize fishing operations.

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