

Overfishing



The biggest single threat to marine ecology today is overfishing.

Fishing fleets exceed the oceans' limits with devastating impacts on marine ecosystems. They are unraveling the intricate web of marine biodiversity that makes the oceans such a vital and productive part of the earth's life support system.

Incredibly, some species have already been fished to commercial extinction with more on the way.

The damaging impacts of overfishing do not stop at targeted fish species or those species caught incidentally in fishing gear, such as marine mammals or seabirds. Overfishing affects the marine ecosystems in which species are embedded. Scientists warn that this will result in profound changes in our oceans, perhaps changing them forever.

The modern fishing reality is dominated by industrialized fishing vessels that far out-match nature's ability to replenish fish. Giant ships using state-of-the-art fish finding sonar and helicopters or spotter planes can pinpoint schools of fish quickly and accurately. The ships also have fish processing and packing plants, huge freezing systems, fishmeal processing plants and powerful engines to drag enormous fishing gear through the ocean.

Problems?

- The Grand Banks of Newfoundland extend past the 360 km limit.
- Endangerment or extinction of various fish species.
- Collapse of the cod and other fisheries in Atlantic Canada.
- The arrest of the Spanish fishing trawler *Estai* in 1995.

Solutions?

- Eliminating reflagging and flag of convenience or pirate fishing vessels.
- Eliminating government subsidies to industrialized fishing vessels and fleets.
- Imposing a global moratorium on new industrialized fishing vessel construction.
- Establishing or enhancing fishing vessel decommissioning schemes.
- Ratifying and implementing the 1995 **United Nations Fisheries Agreement**.
- Supporting the conservation efforts of the **Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization**.

