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Latest News and Resources for Ocean Planners

Global fishery catches and fish stock declines dramatically underreported?

Scientists with the Sea Around Us Project at the University of British Columbia have “reconstructed” fisheries catches from 1950 to 2010 in all of the world’s EEZs and the high seas. They estimate that global marine fisheries catches are significantly higher (possibly by as much as 50% annually) than nations report to the FAO due to lack of information on small-scale fisheries, some recreational fisheries, illegal and other problematic fisheries, and discarded bycatch. They also estimate that annual landings since 1996 have declined significantly faster than official data would suggest and attribute this change to declining fish stocks. The FAO has responded to this analysis, agreeing with basic conclusion that catch statistics (including estimates of additional sources of removals) should be improved but expressing technical reservations about a number of other aspects of the analysis. Other fisheries scientists and fishery industry representatives have criticized the reconstruction analysis, particularly on the basis that catch data should not be considered a measure of the state of a stock. [Read the original analysis](#), [FAO’s response to the analysis](#), and some criticism and discussion of the study ([Scottish Fishermen’s Federation](#) and [CFOOD project](#)).

US opens federal waters in Gulf of Mexico to aquaculture

In January 2016, NOAA implemented the first comprehensive regulatory program for aquaculture in US federal waters. A new permitting system will allow the cultivation of species such as red drum and cobia in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico for an initial period of 10 years. There has been commercial farming of marine species such as mussels and salmon in US state waters for many years, but there are not currently any commercial aquaculture operations in federal waters. According to Michael Rubino, director of the NOAA Fisheries Office of Aquaculture, “This is all about managing and expanding seafood farming in an environmentally sound and economically sustainable way. The permit process we’ve laid out accounts for the region’s unique needs and opens the door for other regions to follow suit.” Fishermen and environmental groups have filed a lawsuit against NOAA over the plan to open the Gulf of Mexico to aquaculture due to concerns that it will affect the fishing industry and environment. Learn more about [the new rule](#) and [opposition to it](#).

Tools and approaches for avoiding ecological thresholds summarized

Ecological thresholds are points at which a relatively small change or disturbance in conditions causes a significant change in an ecosystem. Understanding of the dynamics of ecological thresholds, including when thresholds will be crossed, is currently limited. But there are approaches – such as ecosystem monitoring and statistical methods for identifying thresholds and indicators – that practitioners can use to help avoid reaching ecological thresholds. A new paper published in *Frontiers in Marine Science* reviews the current state of knowledge about ecological thresholds and uses real-world examples to demonstrate these approaches. [Read the paper](#).

Publications provide “blue solutions” from Latin America and the Caribbean and guidance for creating more

The Blue Solutions Initiative (comprised of partner organizations GIZ, GRID-Arendal, IUCN and UNEP) has released two new publications. “Blue Solutions from Latin America and the Wider Caribbean” features 50 “blue solutions” – technical, scientific, and policy practices that are adaptable and replicable in other geographies and contexts. The solutions range from regional conservation trust funds to communication tools for participatory vulnerability assessments. The other publication, the “Solution-ing Workshop Methodology Handbook”, published in conjunction with the Panorama Initiative, walks users through the process of planning and conducting their own “solution-ing” sessions to draw out possible “solutions”. [Read the solutions from Latin America and the Caribbean](#), and [download the handbook](#).

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