

**Too Few Fish in the Sea**

**By Sam Farr**

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Carl Safina's review of how traditional fisheries management strategies have failed both the fish and the fishermen is right on target, as are his recommendations for new management strategies. But I encourage all of us who think about the ocean to expand our thinking: fishing isn't the only activity that affects fish and the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) isn't the only agency with jurisdiction over the ocean.

Traditional fisheries management has focused explicitly on fish, with plans addressing single species or groups of similar species. Traditional governance of resources has similarly focused on individual resources, ceding management of different resources to different agencies: fish to NMFS, oil to the Minerals Management Service, navigation to the Coast Guard. But increasingly, science is showing us that these seemingly disparate resources are delicately interconnected.

Discussion abounds in the scientific and popular media about dead zones and harmful algal blooms in the ocean and the nutrients from runoff that create them. Debate rages about the future of oil drilling and offshore renewable power sources in America's energy future. Tensions and tempers continue to run high as the Navy develops sonar technology that could harm marine mammals. Congress is working up climate change legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

All these activities impact the ocean and its inhabitants, and all these activities impact one another.

As we begin to move toward more integrated systems for managing fisheries, we must recognize the broader ocean and global ecosystem -- including humans -- and integrate it as well.

Toward that end, I have been working for nearly a decade in Congress on a piece of legislation, Oceans-21, that would move us in this direction. Oceans-21 establishes a national ocean policy for the United States. It creates a governance system based on the notion that the multi-agency approach we currently employ must be streamlined so we can continue to enjoy

the many benefits the ocean provides us.

For too long we have reaped those benefits of the ocean. We've harvested fish and extracted oil. We've hidden away our waste and pollution, pumping or dumping it offshore and out of sight.

But the ocean's bounty isn't infinite, nor is its capacity to absorb our refuse unlimited. The time has finally come for us to recognize these truths and take action: we must learn to use the ocean in a sustainable way.

The ocean is the single largest natural resource on the planet and is critical to the habitability of our planet. It's not just our fisheries that are at risk, but our very future.

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