

# **Fishing for Answers**

**Making Sense of the Global Fish Crisis**

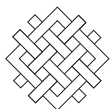


**YUMIKO KURA**

**CARMEN REVENGA**

**ERIKO HOSHINO**

**GREG MOCK**



**WORLD  
RESOURCES  
INSTITUTE**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

HYACINTH BILLINGS  
*Publications Director*

GREG MOCK AND CARMEN REVENGA  
*Editors*

FERNANDO GONZALEZ-IGLESIAS SITGES  
*Illustrations*

KRISTIN DEUEL DUFFY, DEVER DESIGNS  
*Cover Design and Layout*

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## FOREWORD

Fishing and the places where fish live hold a special place in each of our lives. We are recreational fishermen and environmentalists who get joy from simply being on the water — sparkling brook or the restless ocean. We have each seen waters we love damaged by overuse, too little care, and the effects of pollution. We have seen the conflicts among recreational fishermen, commercial fishermen, conservationists, regulators, and scientists grow. No aquatic ecosystem is immune from the forces that contribute to overfishing and degradation of habitat.

Given our personal experience we found *Fishing for Answers: Making Sense of the Global Fish Crisis* compelling. This report is a much needed contribution to the ongoing debate about the scale of and response to the “global fisheries crisis.” The current alarming rates of fish stock depletion and degradation of aquatic ecosystems serve none of those who has a stake in the fate of the oceans, rivers, and lakes, and the vast resources that they contain. None of us wants to contemplate a time when our world’s rivers and seas are drained of the richness and abundance of life that sustains not only our fishing pastime, but more importantly the lives of millions of people who depend upon fisheries for their food source and livelihood.

Many of those involved in fishing — fishers, industry, policy-makers, and environmental organizations — are already acutely aware of the rapid depletion of key fish stocks and the serious disruption and degradation of the marine and freshwater ecosystems they live in. The exploitation pattern in marine fisheries has existed since the end of World War II, as the capacity and range of boats increased, and the technology for locating and catching fish improved. Since 1992, overfishing has become one of the major natural resource concerns for coastal nations. Seventy-five percent of commercially important marine and most inland water fish stocks are either currently overfished or are being fished at their biological limit, putting them at risk if fishing pressure increases or the marine habitat degrades. Overharvesting and habitat degradation are the main causes driving fish stock declines in marine waters, while habitat loss and environmental degradation are the principal factors threatening fisheries in inland waters.

From a consumer’s point of view, however, the depletion of fish stocks is not always obvious. Fish is still abundant in markets and restaurants, although the types may have changed and the prices may be higher. Therefore consumers might ask, are we really running out of fish? Are coastal and freshwater ecosystems nearing collapse? How can you, the consumer, help reverse this trend? *Fishing for Answers: Making Sense of the Global Fish Crisis*, helps answer these and other similar questions that will foster support for the needed policies and measures to achieve sustainable fishing.

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JONATHAN LASH  
*President*  
World Resources Institute

WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS  
*Chairman Emeritus*  
WRI Board of Directors

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