

**SEA GRANT**

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Each year NOAA (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration ) is required to report on the status of U.S. marine fish stocks. The 2006 report is out and here are a few tidbits.

First, the good news. Seventy-five percent of the assessed stock are not overfished and 80% are not subject to overfishing. Overfishing refers to the rate at which fish are being removed from the fish stock while overfished refers to the stock size. An overfished stock is a stock that is below the size that will produce the largest long-term catch. Overfishing is a rate of fishing that will lead to a stock being overfished or is preventing an overfished stock from rebuilding by a certain time. A stock may be classified as overfished by not undergoing overfishing because the stock is recovering on schedule.

The not-so-good news is that the number of stocks subject to overfishing increased from 45 to 48. Three stocks were removed from the list and six added for a net increase of three. One of the stocks removed from the overfishing list was the Gulf of Mexico vermilion snapper (bee liner) while Gulf of Mexico gag, gray triggerfish and dusty shark were added.

Similarly, the number of overfished stocks increased from 43 to 47. Two stocks were removed and six were added.

Among the Gulf of Mexico stocks, only two are currently considered overfished – red snapper and red amberjack. Other stocks occur in the Gulf of Mexico but are managed throughout their range as Atlantic, Highly Migratory stocks. Of these 23 stocks which include species of billfish, tuna and sharks, nine are undergoing overfishing and nine are considered overfished.

To see the complete report go to [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm).