

# Massachusetts slowly killing the fisheries

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Growing up in Peabody, Massachusetts I have always been around the ocean. I have always loved the presence and peacefulness of the ocean. I love to fish; everyone in the north shore of Massachusetts has tried it at one point or another. It is not for everyone. A lot of time and money goes into it. For some others, it is their full time job and they depend on the fish so they can make a living to support their families, as we all want to support ours and live a comfy lifestyle. I have a lot of respect for fisherman that go out to sea everyday and reel fish in with a rod or a harpoon; there is a work ethic that they give off. They are dedicated. For the draggers on the other hand I have no respect for them because they show no respect for the eco system and to other fisherman. A dragger is a a big boat that has a net they pull behind the boat and drag it across the bottom and then pull it up and then sort the fish when they get in the boat.

The fish population has plummeted to depths the environmental police and other scientists are not sure if they can ever fully recover to normal. I have a respect for fisherman that use rods and harpoons to fish. It is harder to fish that way and a lot more work goes into it, but it is worth it. Not many people know what it is like to go offshore fishing on stellwagen banks and start to reel up cod and haddock left and right. Its sad to say my kids wont get to experience it.

Fishing for tuna with a rod and harpoon is one of the hardest thing ever. It is exhausting fighting a tuna fish that can travel over 100 miles in a day and could be considered the strongest fish in the sea. It is hard to throw a harpoon in a tuna from 10 feet away let alone 20-30 feet away on a bouncing

boat. At the docks in Gloucester Massachusetts I was speaking to an old salty beat up tuna harpoon captain; I could tell he had been doing it awhile as I could see the salt on his skin reflecting from the sun, the boat was old and rusty but still going like the captain. He taught me how to throw a harpoon the right way, as he had been fishing this way his whole life. However, the tuna are not there like they use to be over 25 years ago.

The population of tuna has declined tremendously since the 1950's. They would consider tuna around 300 pounds small and a nuisance, because it would ruin their fishing gear. As NOAA states in their database, they have been putting strict regulations on tuna so they do not become extinct. The types of restrictions they have enforced is the size a tuna can be to keep it for commercial and regulation. Also, a recreational fisherman can only keep one tuna a day from 27 to 47 inches and up to one fish over 47 a year. For commercial, it is 84 inches and over.

My Papa (Ralph Natola) used to be a captain of a tuna charter boat and he would always tell me stories and show me pictures of all the tuna they would catch, then we took him out fishing and he could see how much the ocean has changed since he was out on it. " The ocean life is so different now, you barely see any action on the water or splashes of the tuna swimming on the top of the water." As of 1980, they are no longer considered overfished but they still have strict regulations because they are slow growing fish. I hope to one day be able to say tuna are not overfished, even though statistics say they may not be. Dragger boats, plain and simple, do not give a flying fish! They go out for days at a time in their 50-foot plus boats with nets and drive around dragging the whole bottom of the ocean catching whatever is in their

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way. They bring up logs, stick, rocks, pieces of boats anchors, whatever is down there, they catch it.

In a episode of “ Wicked Tuna” one of the draggers catches a fisherman’s anchor as they are driving by and almost sinks the boat. One of the lobster fishermen I know is not happy with draggers. The rough winter we just had forced the draggers to fish on Stellwagen because the seas off of there where too rough. “ This winter I lost over 50 f\*ing traps due to the god damn draggers pulling them up! I have to pay an extra \$1. 50 a pound for f\*ing bait and I am not making the money I should be since they cleared Stellwagen” Obsession. This year they closed the fishing for Atlantic Cod north of Cape Cod.

They have been so over fished and are trying to help the population grow again to the size they were. Environmental Police have very strict regulations to help sustain the population. The trawlers and draggers are mad at the regulations. “ Marshfield charter fisherman Steven James, president of the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association, said that last winter, large boats, which normally fish Georges Bank, farther from shore, “ hammered” Stellwagen Bank for the first time. They crushed Stellwagen, he said.

What’s happening is they’re fishing where the fishing is best.” says the Boston Globe when they interviewed Steven James. What the dragger boats argue is that the environmental police and other departments are taking jobs away from them with the new no cod law. It has become an overfished species because of its taste and value. As stated in the New York Times, “

Some fishermen said the cuts could put them out of business.” They rely on all the bottom feeder fish to make a living and get the money they need.

Some of the fisherman say it is pointless to go out and waste all they time and money to catch fish they can’t even keep. One captain Frank Mirarchi that I know reported , “ In my lifetime, I’ve seen fish come and fish go,” he said as snow flurries fell into the frigid harbor,” Some of it’s generated by us fishing. Some of it’s not.” He is, unlike other captains, honest and realizes the effect the draggers have on the fisheries. All fishing captains are all sort of alike whether you like it or not, we are all trying to make a living off something we love to do. The Environmental Police and fishing boats around have all noticed the fishery start to decrease, and it is making it harder to catch fish and keep it.

There are rules and regulations we all have to follow if we want to continue fishing for the rest of our lives. Some fisherman do not feel like they need to follow the laws and keep the fish they want wether they are legal size or not. We take the risk every time we untie from the docks and steam out to the fishing grounds. There is always that chance we don’t make any money and come back with even more bills to pay. Boats are expensive and when something goes wrong or you need to fill up you know what it means, Break Out Another Thousand.