

## Cruising Club of America

### Environment of the Sea Committee

#### Environment of the Sea Notes, Spring, 2010

1. The State of Seafood. The Monterey Bay Aquarium has released a report entitled “Turning the Tide: The State of Seafood”, ([www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org)) which concludes that while ocean resources are declining, the tide is turning. On the subject of declining resources, the key findings are that no area of the oceans remains unaffected by human activities, that most regions of the world lack effective fishery management, that many marine species are endangered or threatened, that overfishing remains a serious problem and that aquaculture management lags behind its explosive growth. (To the last point, the report notes that in 2010 humans will eat more farmed seafood than wild seafood for the first time in history.) On the positive side, the report concludes that wild fisheries in some parts of the world are improving, that people are paying more attention to eating sustainable seafood, that fishery eco-certification is increasing, that environmental groups and businesses are increasingly teaming up to address seafood sustainability issues and that seafood sustainability issues are increasingly making news.
2. Sea Change. In an article appearing in the March/April, 2010 issue of Eating Well Magazine, Carl Safina, the founder of the Blue Ocean Institute and author of “Song For the Blue Ocean”, argues for a new approach to eating seafood: “If a whole fish is small enough to fit on your dinner plate, it’s probably a good choice for both the environment and your own health.” The reason for this, he argues, is that smaller fish not only tend to be abundant, fast reproducing and more resilient to fishing pressure, but that bigger, older fish accumulate more mercury and other contaminants. The small fish he champions, all rich in omega-3s, are sardines, herring and mackerel. Safina’s article, “Sea Change”, also contains recipes from three leading chefs committed to sustainable seafood.
3. Super Green Seafood. Echoing Carl Safina’s approach, the Monterey Bay Aquarium has added a “super green” list to its Seafood Watch, which identifies seafood which is good for both the oceans and consumers. To make the list, seafood must meet three criteria: low levels of contaminants, the recommended daily level of omega-3s and classification as a Seafood Watch “Best Choice”. Not all farmed fish, by the way, are bad for the oceans or you. Of the nine fish on the super green list, four are farmed. Like Seafood Watch, the Blue Ocean Institute’s website contains a downloadable guide to ocean friendly seafood and sushi. Using Fishphone, consumers may text message the Institute for instantly available seafood information. The feature is accessed by texting 30644 with the message FISH and the name of the fish in question. Other resources for information on

sustainable seafood include NOAA's Fishwatch ([www.fishwatch.noaa.gov](http://www.fishwatch.noaa.gov)), the Seafood Choice Alliance ([www.seafoodchoices.com](http://www.seafoodchoices.com)) and the South Carolina Aquarium's Sustainable Seafood Initiative ([www.scaquarium.org](http://www.scaquarium.org)).

4. Food Retailers For Sustainability. Citing a desire to source its seafood offerings in a sustainable way, in January Target announced that it has eliminated all farmed salmon from its fresh, frozen and smoked seafood offerings in its stores nationwide. In 2006 Walmart pledged that within 3-5 years it would source all fresh and frozen wild caught seafood from fisheries certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MCS) ([www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)). Other large food service companies which have made sustainable seafood commitments are Compass Group North America and Aramark. Some, but not all, of Whole Food's fish is certified by the MCS.
5. Identifying Sustainable Seafood Can Sometimes Be A Challenge. Mark Bittman, the author of a book entitled "Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying and Cooking", makes the interesting point in a New York Times article that it is not always so easy to identify or find fish which have been approved by Seafoodwatch or other similar services, because several fish may go by the same name or be ok to eat if they come from one area of the ocean, but not from another, or because it is difficult or impossible to know where a given fish came from or how it was caught. See "Loving Fish, This Time With The Fish In Mind", New York Times, June 10, 2009, page D1.
6. To Fight Global Warming, Eat Frozen Fish. In another New York Times op-ed piece (December 9, 2009) Astrid Scholz, Ulf Sonesson and Peter Tyedmers, (two ecological economists and a food systems researcher) suggest that fresh salmon has about twice the environmental impact as frozen salmon because most fresh salmon is shipped long distances by air, the most carbon-intensive form of transportation. The authors argue that the taste and quality of fish which is flash frozen at sea is nearly indistinguishable from fresh fish and that frozen fish can be shipped to distant locations by transportation means which have much lower environmental impacts.
7. The Downside To Demand For Omega-3s. Do you know much about menhaden? Paul Greenberg, the author of "Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Food", which will be published in July, writes in an Op-Ed piece that a significant percentage of fish oil comes from this fish, "a big-headed, smelly, foot-long" member of the herring family which may be the most important fish in the sea. This is because menhaden, which exist in large numbers, filter feed almost exclusively on algae and this keeps the water clean. However, because they are easy to catch and are in demand not only for fish oil, but many other products, they are being over-fished, principally by a single Houston-based company whose boats have now been banned by 13 or the 15 Atlantic States. They continue to fish in North Carolina and Virginia and in Federal waters.

8. Plastic Marine Debris. One of the most pervasive problems facing the world's oceans is plastic debris. This summer the Sea Education Association (SEA) will conduct the first-ever research expedition dedicated to examining the accumulation of plastic marine debris in the Atlantic Ocean. The research will be conducted east of Bermuda and will expand upon SEA's more than 20 year debris database. Much has been written about the enormous accumulation of plastic in the Pacific Ocean, but there has been far less focus on the issue in the Atlantic. John Bullard, President of SEA, is a member of the CCA's Environment of the Sea Committee. For more information about the expedition, including international press coverage of SEA's work, go to [www.sea.edu](http://www.sea.edu). For information about research being conducted by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography on plastic and other debris in the North Pacific Ocean Gyre, see "Inside the Plastic Vortex" in Scripps' e-magazine at [www.exploration@ucsd.edu](mailto:www.exploration@ucsd.edu).
9. Two Books. Myron Arms, a member of the Environment of the Sea Committee, has published his fourth book, True North – Journeys Into The Great Northern Ocean, a collection of 16 essays describing his sailing experiences in the Northern Ocean aboard his boat, Brendan's Isle, to Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. The essays explore the motives of the author and his crews, evoke the landscapes visited and describe an environment that despite its vastness, is vulnerable. Sustainable Sailing – Go Green When You Cast Off, by Dietier Loibner, is a book about the environmental impact of sailing which focuses on boat design, construction and operation. Each of the book's 14 chapters contains numerous on-line references for those who wish to look further into a given subject. The author is an editor for Soundings Magazine and the U.S. correspondent for Yacht, Europe's largest sailing magazine.
10. Waves – Good and Bad. An article appearing in the September 9, 2009 issue of The Economist ("Monsters of the Deep", p. 82) reports that research using microwaves to create laboratory models of waves tends to support anecdotal evidence from seamen that rogue waves are not as rare as once thought. A scientist quoted in the article suggests that the day might come when it will be possible to "provide a warning in places where rogue waves may be prone to appear". In October, 2009, the New York Times reported that a wave power generator was ordered by a German power company which is planning a three year test. The generator is due to be installed at the European Marine Energy Center in Orkney in northern Scotland. The World Energy Council has estimated that the market potential for wave energy is at about 10%.
11. The Great Lakes In The News. The near approach of Asian carp, a voracious, invasive fish which some believe could destroy the ecosystem of Lake Michigan by consuming what the lake's native fish eat, has touched off a legal dispute between several Midwestern states. There is concern that the carp might breach an elaborate barrier system installed to block their passage into Lake Michigan. If so, the only thing keeping these fish from the lake is a single lock which is opened regularly for boats. In another development, on February 22, the EPA released an

action plan to guide the Obama Administration's efforts to restore the Great Lakes. Priorities under the plan are cleaning up the most polluted areas of the lakes, controlling invasive species, protecting high priority watersheds, reducing runoff from urban areas and restoration of wetlands. The initiative depends on yearly allocations of \$475 million. See [www.great-lakes.net/infocenter/restoration.html](http://www.great-lakes.net/infocenter/restoration.html).

12. Oil Companies Fun Ocean Science. An article in Earth Magazine reports that Exxon Mobile has mobilized eight other oil and gas companies to study the interaction of industry and marine life. The project, known as "JIP" for short, has funded independent researchers who are trying to figure out things such as how whales process sound and how sonar-equipped ships can avoid whales. To avoid conflicts of interest, a rigorous process has been put into place for the selection of proposals to be researched and all research results must be published in peer-reviewed journals. See "Of Sounds and Cetaceans: Turning Down The Volume on an Increasingly Noisy Underwater World" by Mary Caperton Morton. Earth Magazine, February 2010, p. 36.
13. One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish. 2010 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Dr. Seuss' "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish". Dr. Seuss and The Ocean Project will join forces to celebrate World Ocean Day 2010. Watch the Environment of the Sea Committee's webpage for more about World Ocean Day, which will be observed on June 8.