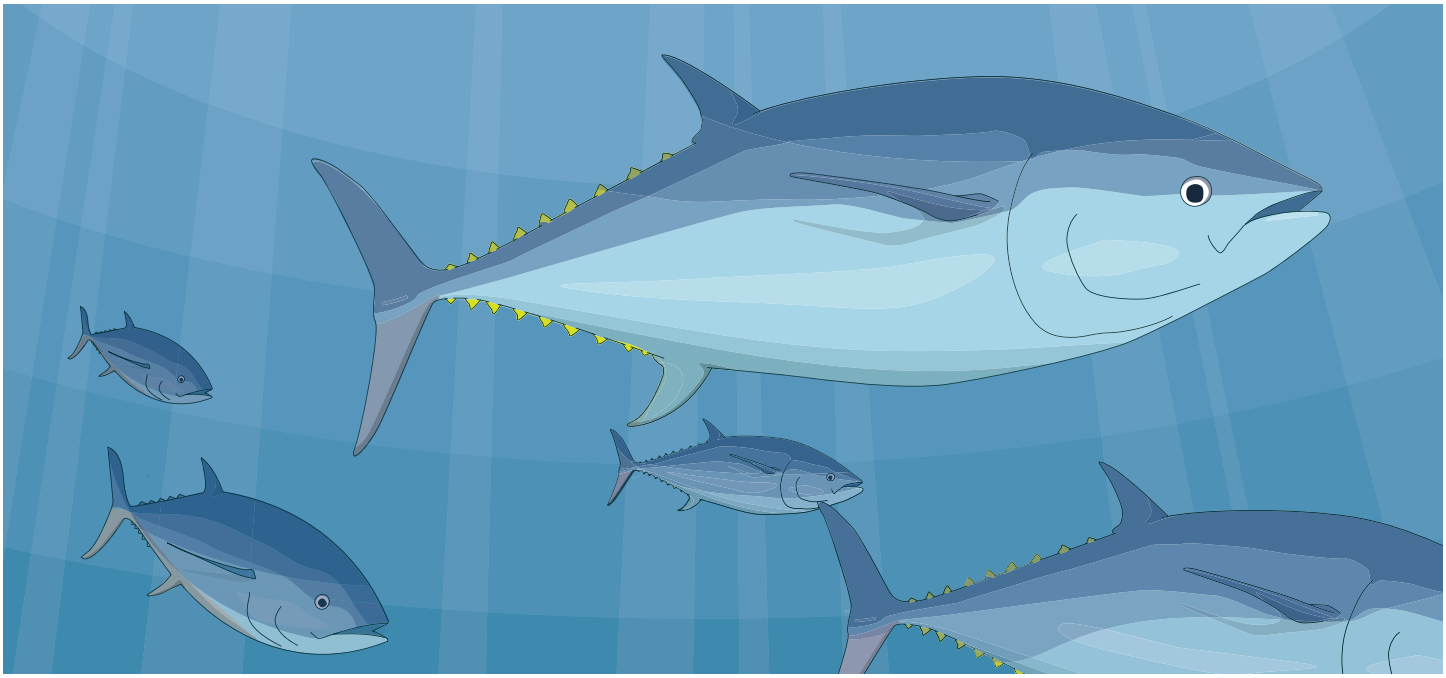
A brief from THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS | June 2014



Stopping the Waste of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

Built for speed and endurance, the bluefin tuna is one of the largest and fastest fish in the sea. Because of decades of overfishing, the western Atlantic population of bluefin has declined by 64 percent since 1970. Yet under current commercial fishing regulations, these bluefin are caught and often killed incidentally by surface longlines targeting other fish. This situation has drawn the ire of fishing communities, scientists, conservationists, and other concerned stakeholders from Texas to Maine.

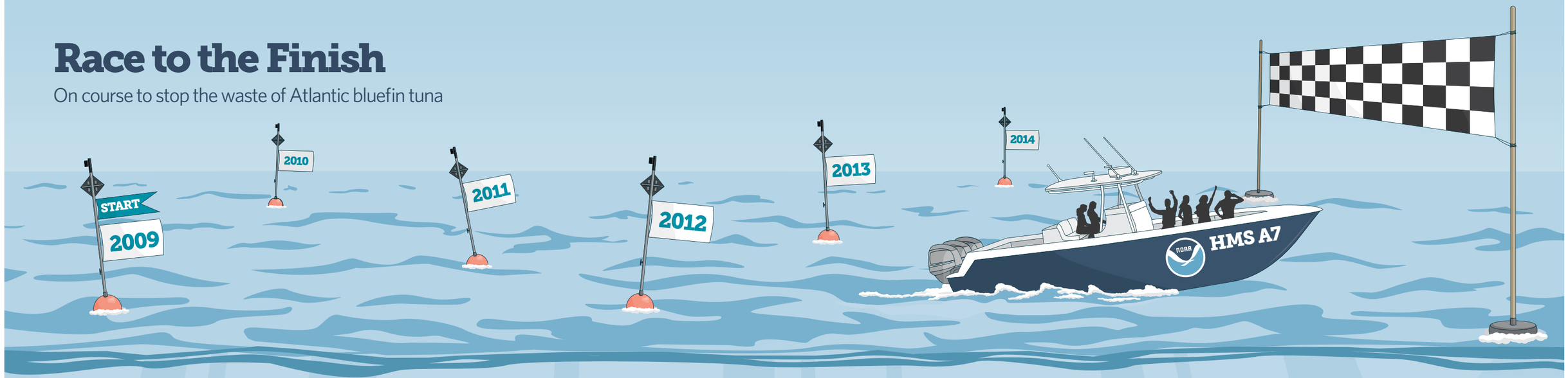
Even though the targeting of bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico has been prohibited for more than 30 years, fishery managers still face a significant challenge in rebuilding this population. This is due in part to the surface longline fleet in the western Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, which continues to exceed its annual bluefin subquota and waste mature fish by discarding them dead. This waste is of particular concern in the Gulf, the only known spawning ground for western Atlantic bluefin tuna.

To make matters worse, the 2010 Gulf oil spill exacerbated the negative environmental impacts of surface longlines. Recent scientific research indicates that the Deepwater Horizon disaster could affect the reproductive potential of bluefin for decades.

The good news is that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service, or NOAA Fisheries, has been working hard to protect bluefin tuna. And the agency's marathon race to find a solution is nearing the finish line.

Race to the Finish

On course to stop the waste of Atlantic bluefin tuna



June 2009

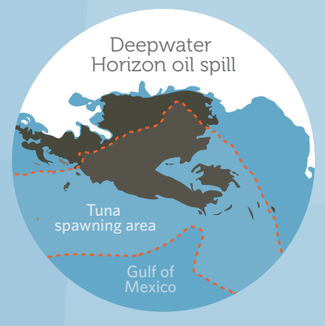
Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

NOAA Fisheries begins considering changes to regulations governing U.S. Atlantic bluefin, swordfish, and shark fisheries and seeks public comment.

April 2010

Deepwater Horizon oil spill

The biggest oil spill in U.S. history affects up to 20% of the only known spawning area for western Atlantic bluefin and lasts through its peak spawning season.



September 2011

White paper on bluefin tuna catch in U.S. surface longline fishery

NOAA Fisheries examines increased bluefin mortality and potential solutions in the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

April 2012

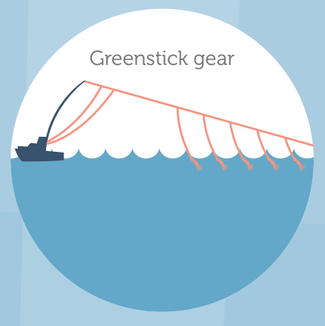
Scoping document on bluefin rule

NOAA Fisheries presents several solutions, including protecting spawning fish and limiting incidental bluefin tuna mortality on surface longlines.

May 2012

Alternative gear pilot program

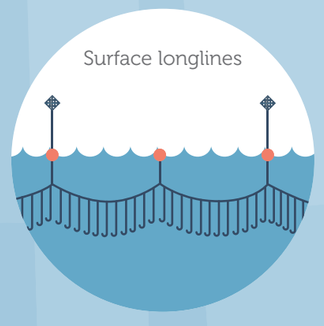
Fishermen begin testing selective fishing gear in the Gulf. Initial results indicate these methods are ecologically and economically viable.



September 2012

Pre-draft of bluefin rule

NOAA Fisheries prioritizes protection of spawning bluefin and limits to incidental mortality on surface longlines, among other things, to help bluefin recover.



June 2013

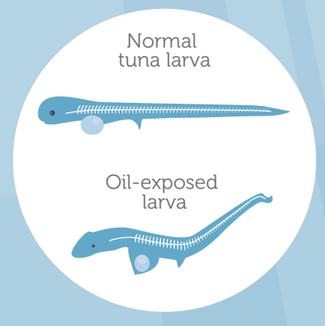
New data on bluefin bycatch

NOAA Fisheries publishes data showing that, in 2012 alone, the discards from the U.S. surface longline fishery wasted 22% of the entire U.S. bluefin tuna quota.

August 2013

Proposed bluefin rule

NOAA Fisheries proposes a gear-restricted area in the Gulf, a cap on bluefin mortality, and better monitoring of longlines. But the restricted area is too small and short in duration.



February and March 2014

Studies show impacts of oil spill on bluefin

NOAA Fisheries and Stanford University co-publish two studies showing that oil from the spill can cause deformities in bluefin.

Summer 2014

Expected:

Final bluefin rule

NOAA Fisheries issues a final rule effectively preventing waste of bluefin and supporting spawning in the Gulf with minimal damage from longlines.

NOAA Fisheries is close to providing a long-term solution to this decades-old problem. The agency can help stop the waste of bluefin tuna and help Gulf commercial fishermen in the wake of one of our nation's worst environmental disasters by taking the following steps.

Finalizing strong regulations that:

- Implement a gear restricted area in the Gulf of Mexico to protect spawning bluefin tuna during their peak spawn.
- Enforce a firm annual limit on the incidental mortality of bluefin for the entire U.S. surface longline fleet along the Atlantic coast and in the Gulf of Mexico to promote equity among fishing sectors and reduce discards.
- Improve monitoring of the surface longline fleet.

Supporting the transition by Gulf of Mexico fishermen from surface longlines to more selective fishing gear.

- NOAA Fisheries can use oil spill restoration funds to create a voluntary program to switch fishermen to highly selective alternative gears, such as greensticks to target yellowfin tuna and buoy gear to target swordfish.

For further information, please visit:

pewenvironment.org/gulftuna

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