

Stop Bottom
Trawling Campaign

Bottom Trawl Gear

Deep Sea Corals:
The Cradle of Sea Life

What You Can Do
to Save the Oceans

Oceana Solutions

Oceana's Pacific
Deep Sea Coral Initiative

Federal Regulation of Roller
and Rockhopper Gear and
Bottom Trawling

Regulation of Roller and
Rockhopper Gear and Bottom
Trawling in State Waters

About Oceana

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BACKGROUND:

Oceana is a non-profit international advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the health of the world's oceans. In 2002, the American Oceans Campaign merged with Oceana, strengthening the organization's outreach and constituency throughout the United States. Oceana's diverse professional staff is comprised of marine scientists and economists, policy experts, lawyers, and communications professionals—all dedicated to protecting the global marine environment. Headquartered in Washington DC, Oceana has staff in Alaska, California, New England and Chile and is opening an office in Europe. Oceana currently has over 100,000 members and supporters which include individuals from all over the world who enjoy, depend on and seek to protect and restore the world's oceans.

CAMPAIGNS:

Oceana was created to address the root causes of problems affecting life in the sea, with a particular emphasis on fishing, habitat destruction and pollution. Oceana works at the local and regional level to promote solutions to these problems, and is currently engaged in three national campaigns aimed at solving particular problems that exist in the United States and in many other parts of the world (descriptions attached). The first of these is focused on reducing the vast amounts of marine life including fish, sea birds, and marine mammals that are caught

inadvertently each year by fishing vessels and thrown overboard either dead or dying. The second seeks to eliminate the most destructive types of bottom trawling with fishing gear that disrupts and destroys huge areas of the ocean floor, together with the diverse array of species that inhabit them. And the third is designed to stop cruise ships from polluting some of the world's most pristine waters with human sewage and toxic chemicals.

LITIGATION:

Efforts to compel government agencies to respect and enforce existing laws designed to protect the marine environment form a central part of Oceana's advocacy work. Oceana's legal team, the largest and most experienced group of marine conservation lawyers in the United States, has won a series of cases over the past several years that have greatly reduced destructive fishing practices in almost 10 million square nautical miles of the ocean—an area more than three times the size of the United States! These lawsuits have protected sea turtles, sea lions, swordfish, sharks, marlins, and a variety of other fish species. Oceana's reputation for successfully challenging the government's failure to fulfill its responsibilities is critical to our success as advocates, since the threat of litigation often encourages government agencies to more seriously consider our calls for strong national policies to protect the marine environment.

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Some recent examples of Oceana's accomplishments, both in the United States and internationally include:

- In 2002, Oceana and its conservation colleagues successfully opposed efforts by the U.S. Congress to weaken important environmental laws. These included proposals by the House Resources Committee to weaken the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and efforts by the Department of Defense to exempt itself from the requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.
- At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in September 2002, Oceana and other groups obtained a hard fought agreement to “eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and to overcapacity,” as well as commitments to end overfishing, protect habitat from destructive fishing practices, and reduce pollution and environmental damage caused by ships.
- In February 2003, Oceana successfully pressured the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service to require shrimp trawlers to use larger TEDs (turtle excluder devices) to protect sea turtles from drowning in fishing nets. Populations of sea turtles are so low that every species is listed by the federal government as either threatened or endangered.
- After intensive advocacy efforts by Oceana and its conservation and sports fishing allies, the California Fish and Game Commission in February 2003 shut down the spot prawn trawl fishery, a particularly destructive fishery responsible for massive bycatch of imperiled rockfish. Oceana mobilized over 3,000 public comments to the Commission, which require spot prawns to be caught using less destructive trap gear.
- In March 2003, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted the “Oceana alternative” as an option to protect the deep water, coral/sponge gardens of the Aleutian Islands. This alternative will be analyzed for possible incorporation into future management of bottom trawl fisheries in the region.

Based in part on an analysis by Oceana's science staff, the Pacific Fishery Management Council in April 2003 adopted stringent bycatch reduction measures that will drastically curtail fishing to rebuild populations of rock fish and other bottom dwelling species along the West Coast of the US. Evidence provided by the Oceana report, was used to defend the management plan from criticism by the fishing industry.