



Study: World running out of fishing room

Published: Dec. 3, 2010 at 8:23 PM

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Dec. 3 (UPI) -- Earth has run out of room to expand world fisheries and maintaining the present supply of wild fish is unsustainable, a Canadian study says.

University of British Columbia researchers say fisheries expanded at a rate of almost 400,000 square miles per year from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s, and then the rate of expansion more than tripled in the 1980s and early 1990s before experiencing a decline, ScienceDaily.com reported Friday.

"The decline of spatial expansion since the mid-1990s is not a reflection of successful conservation efforts but rather an indication that we've simply run out of room to expand fisheries," study author Wilf Swartz of the UBC Fisheries Center says.

A peak catch of 90 million tons in the late 1980s dropped to 87 million tons in 2005, the study says.

"If people in Japan, Europe, and North America find themselves wondering how the markets are still filled with seafood, it's in part because spatial expansion and trade makes up for overfishing and 'fishing down the food chain' in local waters," Swartz says.

But it's a situation that cannot continue, another researcher says.

"The era of great expansion has come to an end, and maintaining the current supply of wild fish sustainably is not possible," study co-author Enric Sala says. "The sooner we come to grips with it -- similar to how society has recognized the effects of climate change -- the sooner we can stop the downward spiral by creating stricter fisheries regulations and more marine reserves."

© 2010 United Press International, Inc. All Rights Reserved.