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Bleak future for fisheries: study

ALISON AULD, CP

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HALIFAX -- Many fish stocks throughout the world could face near extinction by 2050 if more isn't done to stem the increasing strain on most species, especially those in deep waters, says a report to be released today. The article, to be published in Science Magazine, says authorities must try to contain a trend that has trawlers venturing further offshore and destroying habitats as they search for large species.



The paper, called The Future for Fisheries, describes measures that should be taken to "bring fisheries back from the brink and reduce the danger of extinction for many species."

The world's fisheries have become so stretched because boats have been moving into deeper water to find larger, high-priced fish, such as tuna and groupers, as smaller species become fished out.

Daniel Pauly, one of the article's authors, said that over the last 50 years the international fishery has moved into deeper waters -- a trend that could foreshadow stock losses similar to what happened to the cod fishery in Canada.

"You have one fishery collapsing after the other," he said in an interview from his office at the University of British Columbia.

"The parts of the world that were not fished are now fished . . . this is a very powerful trend."

Pauly and his colleagues suggest there are things that can be done to prevent further erosion of stocks, such as the reduction or elimination of fishing subsidies and the introduction of regulatory reforms to protect fish species already under threat.

Without preventive measures, the scientists contend many fisheries will be



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exhausted in the next four decades and marine geography will be stripped of valuable nutrients and plankton.

"I'm not too optimistic," said Pauly. "If we chose ecology first, then that bleak ending will not happen. If we continue what we have, then we're in trouble."

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