

Ocean Challenge Live!—The Vendée Globe
Solo, non-stop, around-the-world race

WEEK

12 Resource Depletion

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By Rich Wilson, Skipper
Aboard Great American III

Each boat in the Vendée Globe is an example of resource management and depletion. We bring food, fuel, spare sails, spare electronics, extra epoxy and fiberglass, spare rope, etc. Gradually, over the course of the race, these resources are consumed. Food levels decrease; repairs use up epoxy; electronics fail; ropes fray from chafing; and solar panels yellow and produce less electricity. Every skipper has to carefully manage his or her resources to last.

Planet earth has depletion issues, too, and we must carefully manage our resources. The fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal) are being used up, and fuel emissions are depleting our fresh air and increasing global

warming. Many fresh water lakes and rivers have been polluted, thus depleting their availability. Forests have been depleted either to provide wood for building, or in some cases, the land is cleared to provide space for building. In the oceans, fisheries have been over-fished, and only rarely are there adequate resource management programs put in place to allow replenishment.

All of these circumstances boil down to the same thing: we've over-used many of our resources, and now we need to change our way of living. Ultimately, this will be a good thing, as it will push us toward more renewable living. That will be good for future generations, and it's our moral duty to think of those generations and not just our own.



Sustaining Our Fisheries

By Dr. Ambrose Jearld, Jr.
Fisheries Biologist, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA

As Rich sails across the world's oceans he may see occasional sharks or whales, but he will not see the thousands of fish species living in the waters far beneath his boat — many of them species that you and I eat for dinner. Fish is a growing source of food for people around the world, but as more people eat fish and the technology to locate and catch them improves, many species have been depleted (or are being depleted) by overfishing, climate change, and other factors.

We want to be able to keep eating fish, but we won't have enough for the future unless we allow

depleted fish populations to rebuild and grow, and unless we keep other populations at healthy levels.

The good news is that fish are a renewable resource, and they can naturally replenish their populations if the right management measures are put in place. As scientists we try to understand basic biological questions like how does each species of fish grow and reproduce, but we also need to know how the environment or ecosystem in which the fish live affects its behavior and life cycle. This way of looking at the whole picture (and not just the fish) is called ecosystem-based management, and it is being put into practice in many parts of the world. A number of depleted fish populations are recovering, but we have a lot more work to do.

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