



Northeast Fisheries Science Center



## Science Spotlight

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### **NOAA Scientist Honored by International Fisheries Organization**

Ralph Mayo, a longtime fisheries biologist at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center of NOAA Fisheries Service in Woods Hole, Mass., has been honored by the international Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) with its first Outstanding Scientific Contribution Award for his contributions "to the assessment, conservation, and management of fish stocks in the Northwest Atlantic."

Mayo has been a frequent U.S. contributor to NAFO, an intergovernmental fisheries science and management body, since it was established in 1979. He also provided scientific information and advice to its predecessor organization, the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF). NAFO has responsibility for managing the fisheries of member nations in international waters of the Northwest Atlantic Ocean.

"His longstanding desire and commitment to providing 'the best possible scientific advice' is his trademark, and because of this he is kept in highest regard amongst his colleagues," said Dr. Anthony Thompson, Scientific Council Coordinator for NAFO. "The Scientific Council has been fortunate in having some very dedicated and long-serving members. As a relative newcomer to NAFO, I have only seen Ralph's contributions at a few meetings. Ralph strikes me as being quiet, happy and wise, with an influence that is larger-than-life. He sits, he listens, and then he talks in clear concise sentences. I knew a little about ICNAF and NAFO back in the 1970s and 1980s when the organization was very much leading the world in fisheries, and Ralph was there. Now, thirty years on, there are many organizations that influence world fisheries, and Ralph has contributed to those as well. Always a wise word, and always said with enthusiasm. He has set a high standard by which future awards will be judged and given."

"Ralph significantly improved the clarity and transparency of the assessment analyses conducted by the Scientific Council, and his extremely lucid and easily understandable presentations to the NAFO Fisheries Commission were all exceedingly well-received and earned him and the Council great acclaim," his long-time NEFSC colleague Fred Serchuk noted. "He was instrumental in developing and refining the Scientific Council's precautionary approach to fisheries management, and developed an observer program for collecting scientific

data during fishing operations, both of which were subsequently adopted by the NAFO Fisheries Commission. “

Mayo also chaired many NAFO working group meetings, attended and presented research findings at scientific meetings throughout the world, and represented the U.S. in many international organizations including the U.S.-Canada Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee and the Advisory Committee on Fishery Management of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). He made numerous research cruises and served as chief scientist on U.S., Polish, Japanese, German, Soviet, and Canadian research vessels.

Ralph Mayo was elected and served two-year terms on the NAFO Scientific Council as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries Science (1977-1999), the Chair of the Standing Committee on Research Coordination, Vice-Chair of the Scientific Council (1999-2001), and then as Chair of the Scientific Council (2001-2003). He also served on the U.S. delegation to annual meetings of NAFO from 1996-2006.

Don Power, current Chair of the NAFO Scientific Council, first met Mayo in 1986. "Although we have noted only some highlights of Ralph's many contributions, the truly outstanding contribution was Ralph's commitment to the peer review process. Ralph personifies what this award was intended to represent."

Mayo received the U.S. Department of Commerce Bronze Medal in 2003 “for scientific advances in restoring New England groundfish stocks via population dynamics research and management advisory services.” The Bronze Medal is the highest award that can be granted by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere.

In 2004 he received a NOAA Administrator’s Award for “scientific excellence and leadership of the NAFO Scientific Council in assessing the status and providing advice for Northwest Atlantic fishery resources.” The Administrator's Award is a combination honorary and monetary award designed to recognize NOAA-specific contributions in the areas of equal employment opportunity, diversity, scientific research, public service, engineering development, environmental conservation, policy development, administrative support, public affairs, or information systems.

During his career Mayo also received numerous NOAA Special Achievement Awards for outstanding performance. In 1981 he received the Judith Brennan-Hoskins Memorial Award, given to a member of the permanent scientific staff of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center for dedicated service and excellence in scientific research.

Ralph Mayo received his B.A. degree in biology from Northeastern University in 1970 and a M.S. degree in fishery biology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1974. He began working at the Gloucester Laboratory of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, the predecessor of NOAA Fisheries Service, in 1966 while an undergraduate student, and joined the Woods Hole Laboratory of NOAA Fisheries in 1973. Through the years he performed a wide range of duties and held positions of increasing responsibility within the Population Dynamics Branch at the Woods Hole Laboratory and within NOAA Fisheries, while also serving on committees of numerous professional organizations and international committees related to fisheries conservation and management. He retired from NOAA Fisheries Service on August 1, 2009.

NAFO member nations include Canada, Cuba, Denmark, European Union, France, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Norway, Russian Federation, Ukraine and the U.S. The organization publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Northwest Atlantic Fishery Science* for research on environmental, biological, economic and social science aspects of living marine resources and ecosystems of the Northwest Atlantic Ocean.

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Related links:

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO):

<http://www.nafo.int/about/frames/about.html>

NEFS Awards: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/awards/>