



NOAA Fisheries to develop national policy on recreational fishing

April 2, 2014

NOAA Fisheries has announced plans to develop a national recreational fishing policy during its second national Saltwater Recreational Fishing Summit. The policy will broadly guide future actions and better integrate recreational fishing with NOAA Fisheries' mission.

More than 100 leaders from the saltwater recreational fishing community met with NOAA Fisheries leadership at the summit, held April 1-2 in Alexandria, Va., to provide an opportunity to assess recent progress, identify future directions and further strengthen the relationship between the two groups. With nearly 11 million saltwater anglers in the United States, recreational and non-commercial fishermen represent one of NOAA's largest organized constituencies.

"Resolving issues facing our fisheries today requires partnerships between managers, scientists and people who enjoy the resource," said Eileen Sobeck, assistant NOAA administrator for fisheries. "I commit that NOAA Fisheries will actively engage the recreational fishing community, and we will do our part to find cooperative solutions."

The meeting provided a forum for identifying important issues and collaborative solutions, including discussing the quality of the data used to count and characterize the recreational catch and fishing effort, on-the-water fishing experiences, sharing management priorities, and discussing the importance of healthy habitats.

"This summit is the latest in an ongoing conversation with the saltwater recreational fishing community," said Russell Dunn, NOAA Fisheries national policy advisor for recreational fisheries, "NOAA is committed to backing up words with actions like these."

NOAA Fisheries held the first national saltwater recreational fishing summit in 2010 to kick-off the agency's recreational fishing [engagement initiative](#). The event resulted in development of both national and regional action plans to guide agency activities.

NOAA Fisheries committed to working with the fishing public, and coordinate with its advisory bodies, regional offices and science centers to update the national action plan to reflect ideas exchanged at the summit.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and our other [social media channels](#).

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Shore anglers line the beach in Cape Cod, Mass. (Credit: NOAA.)



With nearly 11 million saltwater anglers in the United States, recreational and non-commercial fishermen represent one of NOAA's largest organized constituencies. (Credit: NOAA.)



NOAA FISHERIES

Recreational Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries is an Agency within the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. NOAA Fisheries' mission is to provide stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management and the promotion of healthy ecosystems.

2013 Regional Recreational Roundtables Overview



Looking Forward Together

As part of our effort to better understand the values and priorities of anglers, NOAA Fisheries met with recreational and non-commercial fishermen in a series of regionally-based discussions during the first half of 2013. In addition to connecting anglers and non-commercial fishermen with each other and Agency staff, these meetings provided NOAA Fisheries with valuable input to: inform regional recreational action agenda updates, identify regionally shared issues and priorities, and enhance discussions at the *Managing Our Nation's Fisheries III* conference.

This document presents an overview of the most commonly expressed views voiced during the meetings, but does not represent consensus or the entirety of views expressed. Discussions were held in each of NOAA Fisheries 5 regions. Separate meetings were held in NOAA Fisheries' former Northwest and Southwest Regions which were subsequently merged into a single West Coast Region. The Northwest and Southwest Fishery Science Centers remain independent.

Common Findings

Issues and priorities shared between regions fell into three general categories:

- Data and science
- Management & Conservation
- Communications

Roundtable Meetings

Northeast:
Gloucester, MA
January 17, 2013

Southwest:
Half Moon Bay, CA
February 5, 2013

Marina Del Rey, CA
February 7, 2013

Pacific Islands:
Honolulu, HI
February 12-13, 2013

Alaska:
Auke Bay, AK
March 19, 2013

Northwest:
Portland, OR
March 21, 2013

Southeast:
Webinar
April 24, 2013

Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species:
Webinar
May 15, 2013

Data & Science

- Confidence in recreational fishery dependent catch and effort survey data varies widely by region.
 - There is a general perception that recreational catch and effort data are not adequate, in terms of accuracy or timeliness, for in-season management.
 - Many anglers believe current catch and effort data are better suited to identifying catch/effort trends versus precise estimates.
 - There is interest in enhancing the accuracy of estimates of recreational fishing effort embarking from private docks.
- There is wide-spread support for exploring the use of electronic self-reported recreational data collection.
- Some anglers are reluctant to share catch data with NOAA Fisheries out of concern that it will be used to further restrict fishing opportunities.
- Improving socio-economic data collection and expanding its use in regulatory process is seen as essential to improving management of recreational fisheries.
- There is a perception that the socio-economic impacts and value of recreational fisheries, including tournaments, are under-estimated.
- Participants in most regions identified a need to better quantify recreational releases for assessment and management purposes. Similarly, accurate characterization of recreational releases was supported in all regions.
- There is support for NOAA Fisheries' cooperative efforts to improve survival of recreationally released fish. There is interest in undertaking additional cooperative research on barotrauma and other issues.
- Some participants supported/requested additional research on artificial reefs to resolve the question of production vs. aggregation for purposes beyond habitat restoration.
- There is support for using and expanding the amount of fishery independent data in fisheries stock assessments.
- The use of advanced survey techniques, such as high-resolution video and acoustic surveys, to augment/replace traditional approaches, is supported by anglers.

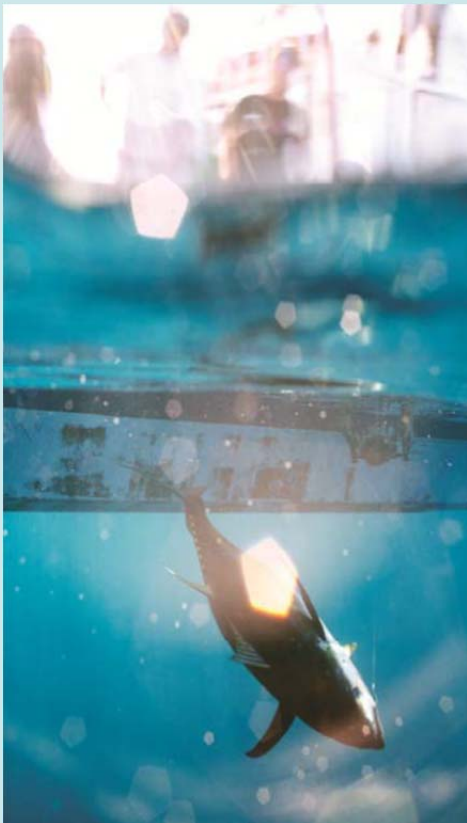


Management

- The motivations and interests of recreational anglers and commercial fishers differ substantially and management should better reflect the differences.
- Expanding fishing opportunities should be a consideration in the management of recreational fisheries.
- Some participants viewed management as too biologically conservative, especially for rebounding fish stocks, resulting in reduced fishing opportunities. Participants cited multiple uncertainty buffers as a contributing factor.
- There is concern that regulators are quick to reduce fishing opportunities, but fail to consider mechanisms to ease restrictions. Anglers suggested including criteria/benchmarks for easing restrictions in Federal rulemakings, which are imposing fishery restrictions.
- Many anglers are dissatisfied with current recreational/commercial catch allocations and support opportunities to revisit them within the council process.
 - There is interest in re-visiting historical allocations for some fisheries, based on new demographic and economic information.



- Anglers expressed concern over the cumulative loss of fishing opportunities to sanctuaries, private land developments, military use, and the proliferation of MPAs under a variety of jurisdictions. Specifically:
 - Controlling management authorities give inadequate consideration to including and responding to angling interests.
 - There is an inadequate recognition of the cumulative effects of the array of closures.
- There is concern over the impacts (current and potential) on recreational fisheries by some recovering or abundant protected species populations (i.e. marine mammals and sea turtles) and associated regulations. Issues identified included: direct predation of depressed fish stocks, depredation of recreationally caught fish, ruining fishing trips (“shutting off the bite”), additional fishing restrictions, and penalties for accidental interactions.
- Anglers expect a “conservation benefit” from improved survival of recreationally released fish to be returned to the fishery in the form of additional fishing opportunities.



Recreational Fisheries Engagement Initiative

The Recreational Fisheries Engagement Initiative is NOAA Fisheries' effort to better understand and address the values and priorities of recreational fishermen through enhanced dialogue, trust, partnership, and responsive action.

For more detailed information on the Recreational Fisheries Engagement Initiative, please visit:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational/>

Management (Continued)

- Some anglers viewed sub-regional management as a way to increase flexibility to better meet their needs.
- Many participants expressed a desire for regulatory stability.
- State management is perceived as superior to federal by many anglers.
- There is interest by some anglers in additional habitat restoration and enhancement work, including the use of artificial reefs, to rebuild, sustain, and enhance fish stocks and fishing opportunities.



Communications

- Anglers want to better understand how reported/collected recreational data are used, more timely feedback on results and application of data collections, and to be informed of ongoing research projects.
- Anglers encourage Agency participation in local fishing shows, meetings with fishing clubs, and periodic meetings with recreational constituents.
- Participants expressed a general willingness to assist NOAA Fisheries in communicating information to the general fishing public.
- There is interest in regularly scheduled Agency/angler discussions to allow for timely dialogue on issues and engage in two-way information exchange.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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