

New West Coast Team & Coordinator to lead engagement on recreational fisheries issues, working to strengthen fishing opportunity & partnerships

A newly established NOAA Fisheries team will work with anglers and fisheries managers to improve recreational fishing opportunity and stewardship throughout the Pacific states—collectively working to conserve fisheries resources for the future.

Recreational fishing is a vital activity for many who live, work, and play on the West Coast; and these fisheries mean big business for the region's coastal communities. In 2012, roughly 1.6 million anglers took part in 7.4 million fishing trips coast-wide. These anglers made over \$1.8 billion in fishing trip and equipment expenditures, supporting over 18,800 jobs and approximately \$2.5 billion in sales that year alone.

The new Recreational Fisheries Team includes staff from NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region. It will be led by Heidi Taylor, Chief of the West Coast Region's Highly Migratory Species Branch, and a newly appointed Regional Coordinator, Craig Heberer. The team will also work closely with recreational fisheries leads at the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers.

“We are honored to serve the recreational fishing community in this new capacity,” said Heberer. “From tuna and rockfish to salmon and steelhead, these fisheries hold deep cultural and economic importance to the West Coast and we are pleased to contribute to the future vitality of these fisheries.”

Taylor, Heberer, and the team will work with the agency's partners to enhance recreational fishing opportunity through improving recreational fisheries science and data, and facilitating research and implementation of recreational fishing stewardship – or ethical angling – practices.

“Working with our partners, we are looking for ways to improve the timing and accuracy of recreational catch, effort, and status data, including social and economic data, to better inform management decisions,” said Heberer.

To this end, the team will focus on strengthening dialogue between NOAA Fisheries, anglers, and the states of California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The team will also work with anglers to foster stewardship practices that can improve their fishing experience and contribute to conservation goals.

These activities and others are part of NOAA Fisheries' [Recreational Fishing Initiative](#), a national program that seeks to advance science and stewardship for saltwater anglers nationwide. Here on the West Coast, the Recreational Fisheries Team will implement the initiative

through the [West Coast Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Action Agenda](#), which is updated each year in partnership with local recreational fishing communities. Taylor, Heberer, and the team will serve as liaisons between these communities and the broader national initiative.

The Recreational Fisheries Team brings a wealth of experience to these issues – Heberer himself is a 16-year veteran of the agency with over 29-years of experience in marine fisheries.

“Craig served as the former Southwest Region’s Marine Recreational Fisheries Coordinator for ten years,” said Taylor. “He’s demonstrated time and again that he understands the nuts and bolts of fisheries management and how to foster productive relationships with stakeholders. Craig has spearheaded many successful cooperative projects that have led to concrete conservation benefits for recreational fisheries. He’s a true asset to this team.”

Comments or questions regarding West Coast recreational fisheries can be directed to Craig Heberer (Craig.Heberer@noaa.gov) and your local representative from the West Coast Region Recreational Fisheries Team identified below.

Colby Brady – West Coast groundfish and Puget Sound recreational fisheries
(Colby.Brady@noaa.gov)

Randy McIntosh – Puget Sound and Washington Coast recreational fisheries
(Randy.McIntosh@noaa.gov)

Garth Griffin – Lower Columbia River Basin recreational fisheries
(Garth.Griffin@noaa.gov)

Lance Kruzic – Oregon Coast recreational fisheries (Lance.Kruzic@noaa.gov)

Matt Goldsworthy – Northern California Coast recreational fisheries
(Matt.Goldsworthy@noaa.gov)

Joshua Fuller – Central California Coast recreational fisheries (Joshua.Fuller@noaa.gov)

Daniel Studt – Southern California Coast recreational fisheries (Daniel.Studt@noaa.gov)

Charles Villafana – California Coast groundfish recreational fisheries
(Charles.Villafana@noaa.gov)

Recreational fisheries leads from NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) and the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) include:

Dr. James Hilger, Fisheries Economist, SWFSC La Jolla, CA

Dr. Edward J. Dick, Stock Assessment Scientist, SWFSC Santa Cruz, CA

Dr. Leif Anderson, Fisheries Economist, NWFSC Seattle, WA

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[LEARN MORE](#) about the national Recreational Fishing Initiative and newly released policy...

Found at: http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/stories/2015/11_02112015_rec_fishing.html