



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, Washington 98115

June 12, 2013

Mr. Dan Wolford
Chair, Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220

Dear Chairman Wolford:

Please find the enclosed draft Northwest Region Saltwater Recreational Fishing Action Agenda for Public Comment. The NW Action Agenda is part of a national effort launched in 2009 by NOAA to strengthen partnerships with the saltwater recreational fishing community. NOAA's 2010 National Saltwater Action Agenda provided a roadmap for action by outlining specific objectives aligned with broad goals identified by the recreational fishing community:

- Improved recreational fishing opportunities
- Improved recreational catch, effort, and status data
- Improved social and economic data on recreational fisheries
- Improved communication
- Improved institutional orientation

These goals are retained in the 2011 Regional Saltwater Recreational Action Agendas, and will remain the core tenets of the 2014-15 Regional Saltwater Action Agendas.

We would appreciate your input on the enclosed draft NW Action Agenda. When final, this document will replace the existing NW Regional Recreational Fishing Action Agenda which was released in November 2011. We are hopeful that this draft will catalyze thoughtful comments on how NOAA can improve our work on recreational issues in the NW. Please send us your comments by July 22, 2013.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of William W. Stelle, Jr.

William W. Stelle, Jr.
Regional Administrator

Handwritten signature of John E. Stein.

John E. Stein
Science and Research Director
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Enclosure



**NOAA
FISHERIES
SERVICE**

**NORTHWEST REGION
Saltwater Recreational Fishing
Action Agenda
For the Period Covering
October 2013-December 2015**

DRAFT for Public Comment

June 2013

**Comments on this draft Action Agenda should be sent to:
RecFishComments@noaa.gov.**

Comments must be received by: July 22, 2013.

Background

NOAA embarked on an initiative in September 2009 to strengthen our partnership with the saltwater recreational fishing community through action. Beginning with the 2010 Saltwater Recreational Fishing Summit, NOAA Fisheries has responded to many of the priorities identified by anglers¹ and detailed in the national and regional Action Agendas.

NOAA's 2010 National Saltwater Action Agenda provided a roadmap for action outlining specific objectives aligned with broad goals:

- Improved recreational fishing opportunities
- Improved recreational catch, effort, and status data
- Improved social and economic data on recreational fisheries
- Improved communication
- Improved Institutional Orientation

These goals remained consistent through the 2010 National Saltwater Action Agenda, the 2011 Regional Saltwater Recreational Action Agendas, and still are the core tenets of the 2014-15 Regional Saltwater Action Agendas.

NOAA adopted a team approach to engage on recreational activities, both externally and internally. The National Policy Advisor coordinates these efforts and provides input on recreational issues directly to the Assistant Administrator and the NOAA Fisheries Leadership Council, which provides long-term policy, programmatic, and budgetary advice. NOAA Fisheries' team of regional recreational coordinators, often the face of NOAA Fisheries in their region, is responsible for much of the on-the-ground progress in the Engagement Initiative. The regional coordinators provide feedback to regional Agency leadership on key recreational issues, enabling the agency to more effectively address recreational opportunities and challenges.

The team approach provides regional and national focus on recreational fisheries within a much larger resource management enterprise which can involve numerous federal, state, tribal, and international bodies. In most instances recreational fisheries transcend state and federal jurisdictions and require coordinated management with the states. The Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions assist in this effort. Some fisheries, e.g., tunas, salmon, and Pacific halibut, involve international considerations. In all cases, effective communications and coordination is essential.

Looking to the future, we anticipate increasing demand for our services as coastal populations grow and increasing numbers of people look to the ocean for recreation and sustenance. Meeting increased demand while facing budgetary challenges will require NOAA Fisheries to continue focusing on achieving the greatest impact with limited resources by forging new partnerships. Tough decisions will have to be made to focus on opportunities with the greatest potential benefit. Not everyone will be happy. It's essential that the partnerships we are establishing today be founded on trust and clear communication. NOAA Fisheries' commitment to the Recreational Fisheries Engagement Initiative remains strong, and the 2014-2015 regional action agendas exemplify this commitment.

¹ For a review of the work done please see the 2012 Recreational Fisheries Year In Review http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2013/04/docs/noaa_rec_fish_report_final_web.pdf

Regional Overview

West Coast recreational fisheries include a diversity of stocks. Salmon species are the most popular target, but Pacific halibut, albacore tuna, lingcod, rockfish, Pacific mackerel, Dungeness crab, clams, and oysters also are targeted in recreational fisheries.

Recreational fisheries are economically and culturally important. In Washington and Oregon alone, approximately 538,000 anglers took part in 1.8 million marine recreational fishing trips in 2011.²

Fisheries management in the Northwest is a shared enterprise between numerous federal, state, tribal, and international bodies³. Recreational fisheries primarily occur in non-federal waters (zero to three nautical miles off the coast) and are managed by the states. Inter-state coordination is facilitated through the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Pacific Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries manage fisheries which occur in federal waters (three to 200 nautical miles off the coast). Management of these fisheries is separated into four fishery management plans: coastal pelagic species, groundfish species, highly migratory species, and salmon species.

Saltwater catch and effort data in the region are collected by state sampling programs, and feed into Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission's Recreational Fisheries Information Network (RecFIN). Pilot programs to improve catch and effort estimates are ongoing, and involve coordination between NOAA Fisheries headquarters, NOAA Fisheries Northwest Region, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Setting the Stage

The inaugural Northwest Action Agenda was released in December 2011 to serve as a publicly available roadmap detailing regional priorities and objectives. As part of NOAA's National Recreational Fisheries Engagement Initiative (Recreational Initiative), NOAA Fisheries' Northwest Regional Office (NWR) and Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) are conducting public outreach for the purpose of updating the 2011 Agenda. This updated Action Agenda is designed to be a discrete list of action items aligned with NOAA Fisheries' mission and budgetary resources and consistent with the goals of the Recreational Initiative⁴.

² The final results from the 2011 National Marine Recreational Fishing Expenditure Survey should be available soon, and will provide the most up-to-date estimates of the economic impact of saltwater recreational fishing. These economic impact numbers will be included final version of the Action Agenda.

³ A refresher on jurisdictional issues and an overview of the fisheries management process is available in Section 3.5 of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the U.S. Portion of the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem at:

http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/FEP_February2013_Draft_for_web.pdf.

⁴ Available at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2011/12/recfish.html>

To arrive at this Draft Action Agenda, NOAA Fisheries staff gathered initial ideas and feedback from the public. NOAA Fisheries consulted with leaders of the recreational fishing community to identify concerns and develop action ideas. Initial planning was done with input from the Northwest representatives to the Recreational Fisheries Working Group of NOAA's Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC). The NWR launched a website in February 2013 to highlight the Recreational Initiative and announce the beginning of a process to update the Action Agenda. On March 21, NOAA Fisheries convened a day-long Recreational Fisheries Roundtable⁵ with invited leaders of the recreational fishing community to solicit ideas for inclusion in the updated Action Agenda.

Note to Reviewers

NOAA Fisheries NWR and NWFSC are releasing this draft Action Agenda to encourage comment by a diversity of individuals and organizations with an interest in enhancing NOAA's science and management approaches to recreational fisheries including:

- Individuals who were not present at the March 21 Recreational Fisheries Roundtable described above or otherwise consulted in the development of this draft plan;
- Participants in non-recreational fishing sectors;
- Members of environmental and other non-governmental organizations;
- Representatives of management agencies (e.g., the Pacific Fishery Management Council, states, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, tribal governments, etc.); and,
- Any other interested party.

This Action Agenda is meant to complement existing management processes and add value to NOAA's interface on recreational fisheries issues. For an action to be included in this plan, it should meet the following criteria:

- Practical and timely (e.g., a project that can be implemented within the life of the Action Agenda);
- Cost-effective and within available resources;
- Value added (e.g., a new activity); and,
- Aligned with NOAA Fisheries' mission.

Reviewers are encouraged to suggest actions that meet these criteria.

Pending Merger

In accord with the ongoing consolidation of NOAA Fisheries' Northwest and Southwest Regional Offices into a new West Coast Regional Office, NOAA Fisheries plans to merge the Northwest Recreational Fishing Action Agenda with the Southwest Recreational Fishing Action Agenda to create a comprehensive Action Agenda for the West Coast. This current draft includes only the agenda items relating to the NWR and the NWFSC given complexities associated with merger activities.

⁵ For more information, see: http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/stories/2013/04_2013_4_recreational_fishing_meeting.html

Opportunities for Public Comment

Public comments on this draft Action Agenda should be sent to: RecFishComments@noaa.gov. Comments must be received by: July 22, 2013.

NOAA Fisheries staff may be available to meet in person or by phone to discuss this draft Action Agenda and facilitate public comments. To make such arrangements, please contact:

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NOAA Fisheries Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE, Bldg 1
Seattle, WA 98115
steve.copps@noaa.gov

or

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Seattle WA 98112
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The Final Action Agenda will be published in autumn of 2013.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions

GOAL 1: Improved Recreational Fishing Opportunities

Objective – Reduce barotrauma-related mortality of recreationally caught rockfish.

Project - Education and Outreach to Reduce Barotrauma-related Mortality of Rockfish

NOAA Fisheries will support education and outreach with recreational anglers to encourage effective use of descending devices and other means of reducing barotrauma-related mortality of rockfishes. This will include the production and distribution of educational materials as well as the free distribution of descending devices. This project may involve support for existing efforts (e.g., by state agencies, NGOs, or private).

Deliverable/Outcome- Distribution of outreach materials and descending devices to x fishermen in 2014-2015.

Timing- Initiate in CY 2014.

Objective – Reduce incidence of monofilament pollution by recreational anglers in the Upper Salmon River.

Project – Monofilament Disposal and Recycling Program.

NOAA Fisheries will provide support to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to implement a monofilament recycling and public outreach program in the Upper Salmon River. Monofilament line discarded into rivers has ecosystem effects including ensnarement of recreationally important species. The program is modeled after BoatU.S. Foundation's "Reel In & Recycle⁶."

Deliverable/Outcome- 15 monofilament recycling stations in the Upper Salmon River.

Timing – 2013-2014.

Objective – Collaborative proposal for habitat restoration to benefit recreational fish stocks.

Project – Collaborative Habitat Restoration

A collaborative team, including NOAA and members of the recreational fishing community, would identify funding sources and develop a proposal for habitat restoration. The Northern Puget Sound Derelict Gear Removal Project is a potential model for this action item. In that project, NOAA's investment of \$75k was leveraged for an additional \$125k plus 500 volunteer hours and resulted in 2.5 acres of restored benthic habitat. The recreational community provided key support for that project. Using that model, NOAA would work with the recreational community to identify and propose a feasible restoration project.

Deliverable/Outcome-

There are three sequential deliverables/outcomes for this objective:

1. The formation of a collaborative team between NOAA, the recreational community, and other appropriate parties;

⁶ <http://www.boatus.com/foundation/monofilament/default.asp>

2. A restoration proposal targeted to an appropriate funding source; and,
3. Initiation of a habitat restoration project.

Timing- Objectives 1 and 2 above completed within the life of this plan. Objective 3 is dependent on funding.

GOAL 2: Improved Recreational Catch, Effort, and Status Data

Objective – Increased understanding of the relationships between forage fish, habitat, and recreational fisheries

Project - Habitat Assessment of Estuarine and Nearshore Forage Fish on the West Coast

Determine local abundance levels and probability of presence/absence in historical (20-50 years old) and recent datasets (last 10 years). These data will be examined in conjunction with habitat data (e.g., amount of wetland area, changes in wetland area) to determine the extent to which habitat modifications influence forage fish presence and abundance

Deliverable/Outcome – An assessment of nine species of forage fish spawning in estuaries and nearshore habitats across California, Oregon, and Washington.

Timing - FY2013 and FY2014

Objective – Improve fish identification by recreational anglers.

Project – Education and Outreach to Improve Fish Identification by Recreational Anglers.

NOAA Fisheries will support the development of an education and outreach program to teach accurate fish identification and reporting by recreational anglers. Interested anglers will be taught species identification to improve the accuracy of their responses to dockside surveys and other appropriate reporting mechanisms. This project may be NOAA-led or be implemented by a grant or contract to a qualified organization.

Deliverable/Outcome- Distribution of outreach materials devices to x fishermen in 2014-2015.

Timing- Initiate grant or contract in FY 2014.

GOAL 3: Improved Social and Economic Data on Recreational Fisheries

Objective – Provide a more accurate measurement of the economic contribution of the charter fleet in the Northwest.

Project – Economic Survey of Charter Boat Operators

NOAA Fisheries will conduct a survey of charter boat operators in Washington and Oregon. The cost and earnings estimates obtained from the survey will be used to estimate the economic contribution of the charter vessels in Washington and Oregon. Additionally, the current economic health of the industry and business owner expectations about the future will be examined. The results will be presented in a report produced by the NWFSC, and the results will be incorporated into the Input Output Model for Pacific Coast Fisheries, which is currently used Pacific Fisheries Management Council to estimate the economic effect of prospective management changes.

Deliverable/Outcome – Develop and administer cost-earnings to charter boat operators in Washington and Oregon.

Timing- The survey will be conducted in the third and fourth quarter of 2013, and the results of the survey will be available mid-2014.

Objective – *Develop a cooperative human dimensions research proposal which would, if funded, improve data on recreational fisheries.*

Project – *Cooperative Research.*

NOAA Fisheries would collaborate with recreational fishermen to propose and implement (if funded) a cooperative research project. Understanding the human dimensions of recreational fisheries is key to more effective and responsive management. Working directly with recreational fishermen to develop and implement a research proposal would enhance the relationship between NOAA Fisheries and the recreational community and ensure the research is relevant to the affected community.

For more information on Cooperative Research, see:
<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/cooperative-research/index>

Deliverable/Outcome- There are three sequential deliverables/outcomes for this objective:

1. The formation of a collaborative team between NOAA, the recreational community, and other appropriate parties;
2. A research proposal targeted to an appropriate funding source; and,
3. Initiation of a research project.

Timing- Objectives 1 and 2 above completed within the life of this plan. Objective 3 is dependent on funding.

GOAL 4: *Improve Communication*

Objective – *Recognize recreational anglers' contribution to marine stewardship*

Project – *Recreational Angler Stewardship Program*

NOAA Fisheries will develop and implement an award program to honor individuals and organizations for their contribution to the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of NW recreational fisheries and their habitat.

Deliverable/Outcome- Annual award.

Timing- Initial award will be made in 2014 with annual awards thereafter.

Objective – Increase awareness and understanding of NOAA Fisheries projects related to recreational fisheries

Project – Create NOAA Fisheries Recreational Fishing Listserv for Northwest Region

NOAA Fisheries will create and encourage interested parties to sign up for an e-mail listserv which will be used to distribute information about existing and planned NOAA Fisheries projects related to recreational fishing in the region. It will serve as a vehicle to inform and engage interested parties on agency activities as appropriate.

Deliverable/Outcome- E-mail listserv.

Timing- Initial listserv will be created in late 2013 / early 2014.

GOAL 5: Institutional Orientation

Objective – Increased awareness of recreational fisheries

Project – Invited Speaker Series

NOAA Fisheries will host an invited speaker series for staff that features speakers from the recreational fishing community.

Deliverable/Outcome- Increased awareness by NOAA Fisheries staff of recreational fisheries interests and issues.

Timing- Speaker series will occur over the life of this Action Agenda.