

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
RECREATIONAL FISHERIES POLICY UPDATE

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a presentation by Mr. Craig Heberer on the Draft National Recreational Fisheries Policy.

The GAP notes that the goals of this policy, “to promote recreational fishing for the cultural, social, and economic benefit of the nation through science-based conservation and management, and to provide for wide-ranging participation in and enjoyment of recreational fishing for present and future generations...” are consistent and in furtherance of the purposes of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

However, the GAP wishes to comment on the paragraph stating the following... “This policy recognizes the authorities and responsibilities of natural resource management agencies, **Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs)**, interstate marine fisheries commissions, states, and advisory bodies and seeks partnership in its implementation.” This paragraph is particularly important in that it **clearly recognizes the authority and responsibilities of the RFMCs**.

This recognition of Council authority is crucial for Goal 1, which mentions, “encouraging periodic review of fishery allocations.” The GAP and the Council have been and will be an essential forum for this kind of discussion. Allocation review should be based on need as a transparent regional process, and not set to some sort of automatic timetable. **The GAP does not see any need for an external directive regarding allocations between recreational and commercial sectors. The Pacific Council has addressed allocations within its normal process for years. It has been a successful collaborative effort and the GAP prefers the status quo. Councils have the proper tools for considering allocation questions.**

The GAP supports Goal 2, “Supports ecosystem conservation and enhancement.” This continues to be an important concern of the GAP and the Council as a whole. In addition, it is noted that the policy “encourages development and application of sustainable, safe aquaculture to support recreational fisheries consistent with existing agency policy.” Examples of this are, the white sea-bass hatchery program in Southern California and the proposed redbird and red snapper hatcheries in the Panhandle of Florida.

Goal 3 discusses coordination with state and federal management partners to align science, management, and enforcement priorities and strategies in support of stable, predictable and well-monitored recreational fisheries. This goal is similar to desired outcomes in commercial fisheries and will be a useful way to improve monitoring of recreational fisheries.

Goal 4 addresses innovative solutions using “new tools, methods, data collection techniques (electronic catch reporting), gear technology and management approaches.” Similar to advances in commercial fishery monitoring, these emerging technologies will inform managers and councils to provide for more real time and adaptive management. This also speaks to the need for greater catch accountability in recreational fisheries.

Goal 5 commits to providing “scientifically sound and trusted biological, cultural, social and economic information to enable balanced, well-informed decision-making bolstered by continuing programmatic improvements.” The GAP supports this commitment.

The GAP also underscores the importance of Goal 6 regarding communicating and engaging with the public.

The GAP agrees that good agency-representative communication with the RFMCs is key to success.

GAP members queried Mr. Heberer about NOAA now having a written policy for the recreational fishing sector. This apparently grew out of commitments NOAA made during the Recreational Fishing Summit in Alexandria, Virginia. A member of the GAP, who is also on Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC), reported that there is no national commercial fishing policy. The GAP was concerned by the lack of written policies for commercial sectors. The GAP emphasizes that commercial fishing considerations should not be pushed aside with this new emphasis on recreational fishing and aquaculture.

PFMC

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