

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
RECREATIONAL FISHERIES POLICY UPDATE

There is little doubt that the Recreational Saltwater Fisheries proposed policy is about allocation issues. The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) suggests that the Council has been managing allocation issues between commercial and recreational fishermen successfully for years. We need to leave these allocation issues to the Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs) and their advisory committees. The HMSAS would also like to know if there is a national policy for Saltwater Commercial Fisheries.

Another issue focused on the lack of science that was being implemented by the RFMCs. However, the RFMCs already DO use science-based management practices using mortality and bycatch reduction plans (BRPs) to support decisions based on quotas or annual catch limits (ACLs).

There was also a statement in the proposed policy that the RFMCs' advisory groups are mostly agency people, and the recreational fishermen at the conference wanted more representation. They did not mention the HMSAS or any other advisory committees at all. The HMSAS feels that the recreational/commercial/charter representation is fair and equitable on the Advisory Committees, at least as far as this Council is concerned. Also, concerning forage fish – they have just barely begun to be managed, and management should improve over time as the scientific data needed to manage them is collected. The report asks NOAA to pay more attention to the economic benefits of recreational fishing, and HMSAS has no problem with that if the information collected is not used to justify taking quota from the commercial sector.

Many suggestions in this policy are in line with what all commercial and charter representatives have been addressing for years such as “the mismatch between data and fishermen’s experience on the water, the general underfunding of fisheries science and management, promoting the use of recreational Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), and improving fishery independent data.” This recreational policy should not be used to divide commercial and recreational fishermen. We have too many issues in common and need to support each other and not create unnecessary allocation battles.

PFMC  
11/18/14