

NOAA FISHERIES

NOAA Fisheries is an agency within the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs. NOAA Fisheries Service provides world-class science and stewardship.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Russ Dunn
National Policy Advisor for
Recreational Fisheries

russell.dunn@noaa.gov
(727) 551-5740
www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Progress Update: A Vision for Managing America's Saltwater Fisheries

In response to the interests of the recreational angling community, NOAA Fisheries has established a number of recent policies and directives and has made significant progress toward addressing the primary recommendations contained in the Commission on Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Management's report, *A Vision for Managing America's Saltwater Recreational Fisheries*.

NOAA Fisheries recognizes that many challenges remain regarding recreational fisheries management. We believe the only route to healthy, satisfying, and enduring recreational fisheries is through partnership and collaboration. We will continue to approach these dynamic challenges by listening to the needs of our constituents and following through on our commitments.

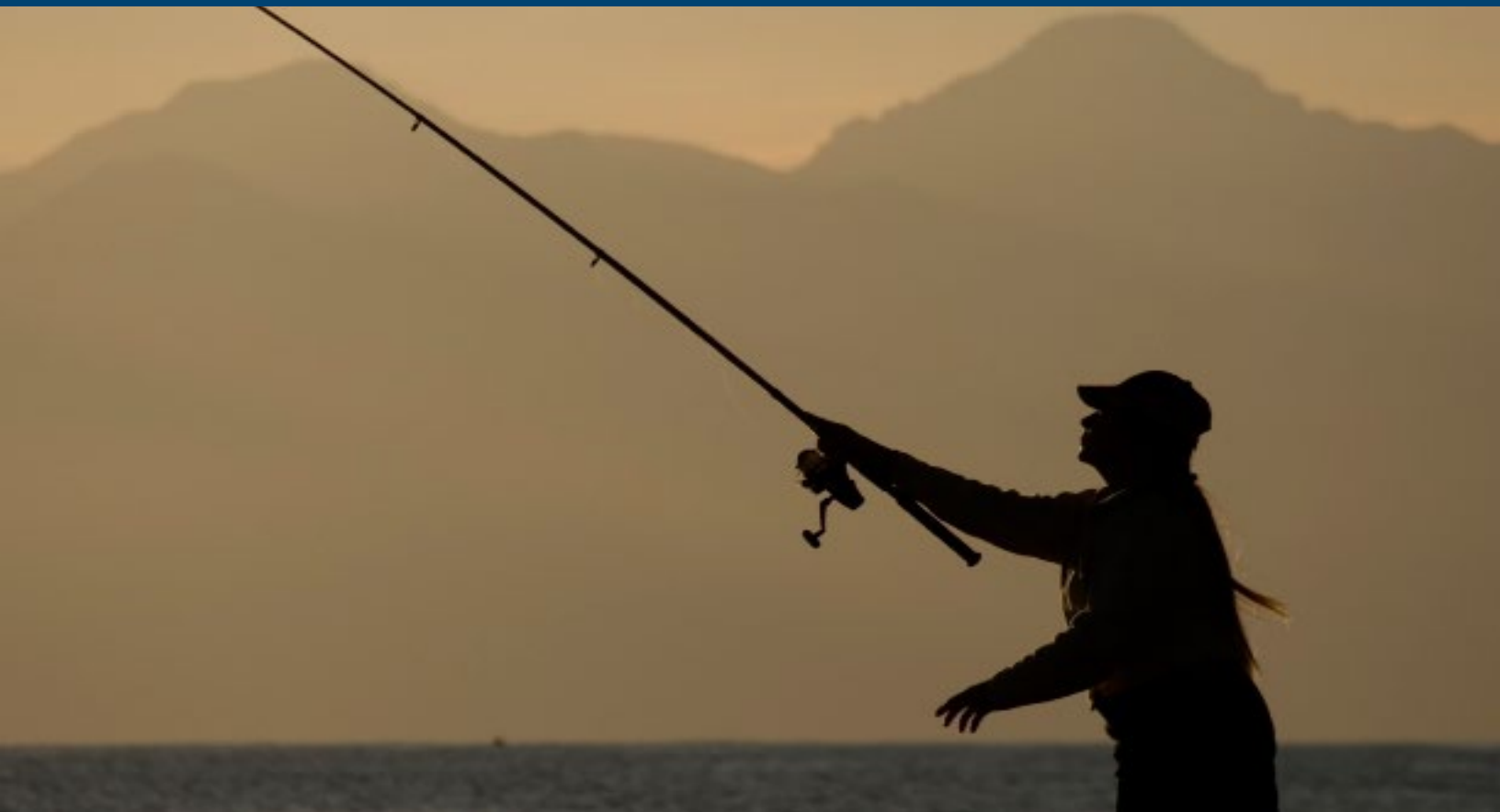
Below are the six primary recommendations outlined in the report, with a brief synopsis of NOAA Fisheries' progress to date.

1. Establishing a national policy for recreational fishing

NOAA Fisheries committed to developing a **national saltwater recreational fishing policy** in March 2014 and released the final policy in 2015. Through extensive dialogue with the recreational fishing public, which included nearly three dozen meetings around the nation, we produced the policy with three overarching principles:

- 1) Support and maintain sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries resources, including healthy marine and estuarine habitats.
- 2) Promote saltwater recreational fishing for the social, cultural, and economic benefit of the nation.
- 3) Enable enduring participation in, and enjoyment of, saltwater recreational fisheries through science-based conservation and management.

NOAA Fisheries then produced both **national and regional implementation plans** to ensure the effective and timely application of the policy. The policy and associated implementation plans serve as a roadmap for establishing priorities and annual planning efforts that have led to many of the successes outlined in this document.



2. Adopting a revised approach to saltwater recreational fisheries management

NOAA Fisheries participated in and provided a \$25,000 federal grant to support the **Alternative Management for Recreational Fisheries workshop** in May 2016 hosted by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and American Sportfishing Association. Senior NOAA Fisheries officials also participated in the **Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative**, and NOAA Fisheries supported formation of a special **Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel** to assist the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council in developing lasting solutions to management challenges.

In addition, NOAA Fisheries is currently finalizing revisions to **National Standard 1 Guidelines** of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Proposed revisions address a number of issues that, if finalized, can help provide flexibility within statutory limits to address specific fishery management issues. The proposed revisions include clarification regarding carry-over of unused quota, multi-year overfishing status determinations, flexibility in determining rebuilding timelines, and other areas of interest to the recreational community.

3. Allocating marine fisheries for the greatest benefit to the nation

In July 2016, NOAA Fisheries released **new guidance** that clarified how and when allocation decisions should be evaluated. This policy was a result of close collaboration between NOAA Fisheries and the Fishery Management Council Coordinating Committee. The policy and guidance collectively provide a mechanism to ensure fisheries allocations are periodically evaluated to remain relevant to current conditions.

In parallel with this effort, NOAA Fisheries worked closely with the regional fishery management councils on allocation issues, a number of which were relevant to recreational anglers. This included the Gulf of Mexico Council, which revised allocations of Gulf red snapper allocations from majority commercial (51-49%) to majority recreational (48.5-51.5%). Allocation discussions are underway for Mid-Atlantic summer flounder, and new allocation approaches are being evaluated for fisheries such as Alaska halibut.

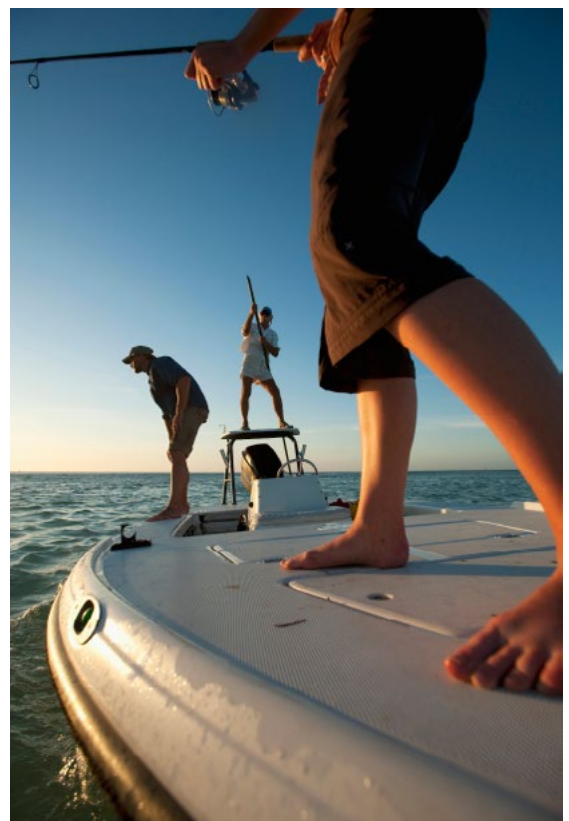
4. Creating reasonable latitude in stock rebuilding timelines

NOAA Fisheries is currently finalizing revisions to **National Standard 1 Guidelines** of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), which explicitly state the MSA's requirement that a rebuilding plan must identify a time period for stock rebuilding that is as short as possible. The proposed revised NS1 guidelines do not include any provisions that modify this statutory mandate. However, the NS1 guideline revisions propose two additional calculation methods to estimate a stock's maximum rebuilding time. The two additional methods are designed to provide a Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) with options so the maximum rebuilding time estimate is based on a calculation method that best aligns with the relevant biological data for the stock.

5. Codifying a process for cooperative management

The process for cooperative management between the regional fishery management councils and state agencies already exists under the MSA on an as-needed basis. The Morris Deal report specifically recommends that councils be required to develop a process to determine, on a stock-by-stock basis, which management entities are most appropriate and capable of successfully managing the stock.

The federal fisheries management system applies cooperative management authority with state agencies in many instances already, and NOAA Fisheries supports doing so in appropriate instances. Highlights of this existing cooperation between the federal system and state agencies include shared management of 26 species or species groupings with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. In addition, NOAA Fisheries is on record supporting delegation of Gulf of Mexico red snapper management to state governments under the umbrella of the MSA and examining the potential of shifting cobia management from the South Atlantic Council to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.





6. Managing for the forage base

Multiple councils, with support of NOAA Fisheries, have approved measures to protect ecosystem health with fishery management plan amendments focused on forage fish. Ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) is an agency goal, and the regional fishery management councils have made progress in addressing forage fish management issues.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted the **Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1 (CEBA 1)**, which amended the Council's four fishery management plans to provide adequate protection for forage fish. CEBA 1 prohibits the development of new directed fisheries on forage species that are not currently managed by the Pacific Council, or the states, until the Council has had an adequate opportunity to assess the science relating to any proposed fishery and any potential impacts to existing fisheries and communities.

On August 9, 2016, the Mid-Atlantic Council approved the **Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment**. The amendment prohibits the development of new, or expansion of existing, directed fisheries on unmanaged forage species until adequate scientific information is available to promote ecosystem sustainability. Fifty species representing 15 taxa are now covered under this amendment. Other councils also have management plans in place or under development to better manage the forage base.