

Angling Management Organizations: An Option for Cooperative, Rights-Based Management of Recreational Fisheries

Robert J. Johnston

**Agricultural and Resource Economics
University of Connecticut**

Jon G. Sutinen

**Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
University of Rhode Island**

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Why revisit recreational fisheries management? (What is wrong with the status quo?)

In many recreational fisheries:

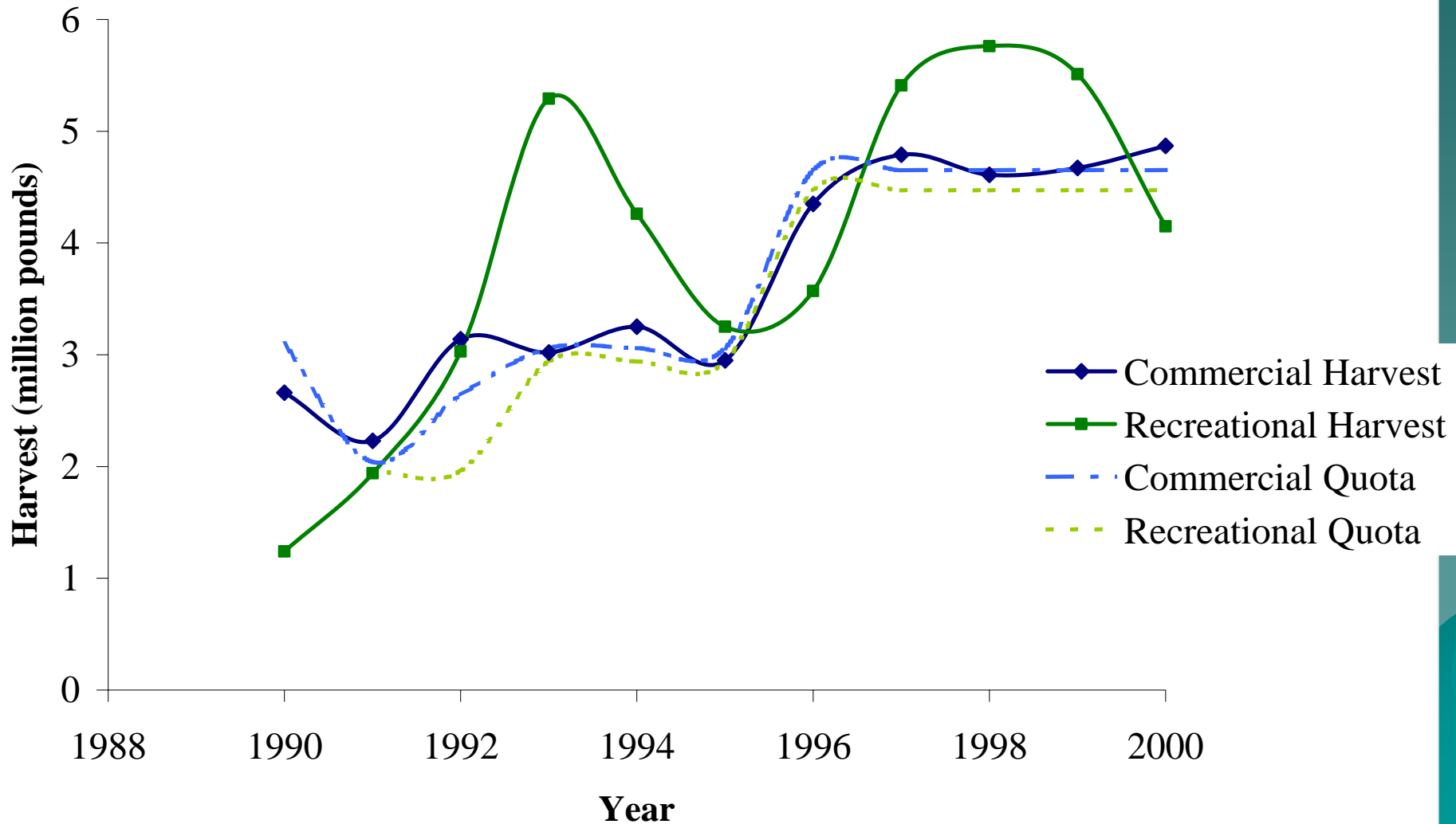
- Trends in the wrong direction—decreasing bag limits, shorter seasons, increasing minimum sizes, etc.
- Weak control of recreational harvest, combined with incidental and commercial harvest, threatens sustainability.
- Management often occurs over broad geographical regions; interests of anglers may be heterogeneous within these regions.

Why revisit recreational fisheries management? (What is wrong with the status quo?)

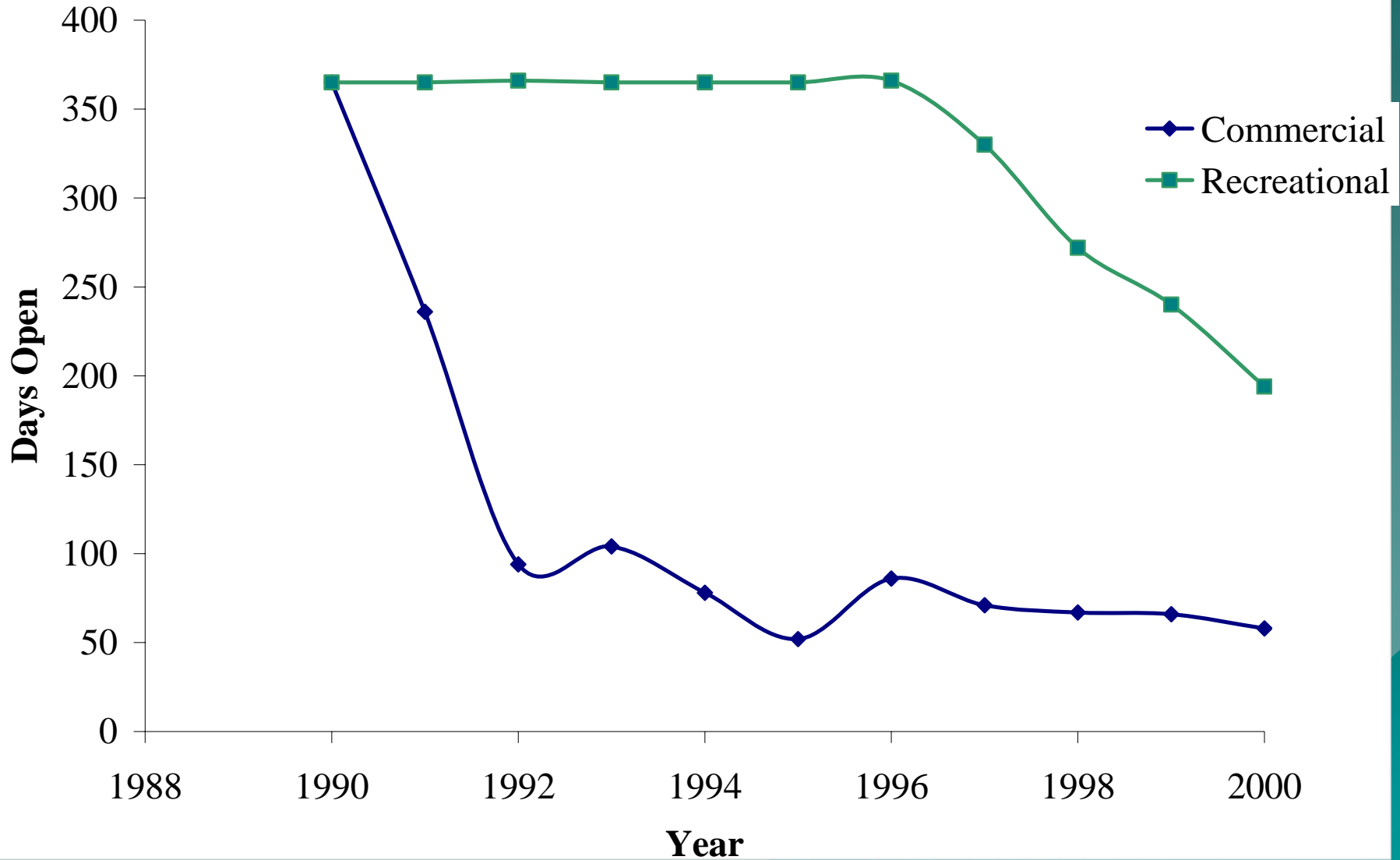
In many recreational fisheries:

- Regulations do not serve all anglers equally well.
- Compliance with fishery regulations can be weak—particularly if anglers have little input in management.
- Quotas difficult to track. Harvests may exceed “soft” TACs.
- Recreational sector under increasing pressure given increasing rights-based commercial management.
- New ideas for managing recreational fisheries could reduce recreational/commercial conflicts.

Example: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Harvest and Quota



Example: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Days Open



Example: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper

- ◆ Species overfished and subject to overfishing.
- ◆ Conflict between recreational sector, commercial sector, incidental harvest.
- ◆ Recreational management does not serve Eastern (FL, AL) and Western Gulf (TX) regions equally well.
- ◆ IFQs proposed for commercial sector.
- ◆ Recent emphasis on MRFSS data concerns may obscure more fundamental problems.
- ◆ Is there a good solution?


Promising trends elsewhere...

- ◆ Rights-based management highly successful in many commercial fisheries.
- ◆ Co-management can increase voluntary compliance, decrease enforcement costs, and increase angler satisfaction.
- ◆ Community-based management experiments (e.g., the Pollock Conservation Cooperative) have met with success in commercial fisheries.


Angling Management Organizations (AMOs)

- ◆ Novel approach to reduce conflicts and improve sustainability and value of recreational fisheries.
- ◆ Combines three promising trends in fishery management:
 - Devolution of management
 - Strengthened harvest rights
 - Co-management
- ◆ First proposed in Sutinen and Johnston, *Marine Policy* 27 (2003).

Angling Management Organizations (AMOs)

- ◆ Conceived as a large, locally organized group of recreational anglers who would jointly manage a recreational fishery in a specific area.
 - ◆ Established in coordination with regional Fishery Management Councils.
 - ◆ Provide anglers the ability to cooperatively manage their own fisheries, within limits set by regulators.
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More Specifically, AMOs Would Be...

- ◆ Private sector entities
 - ◆ Comprised of recreational fishermen and others who elect a governing board
 - ◆ Assigned a fixed share of the recreational quota
 - ◆ Given responsibility to manage quota share
 - ◆ Region and species specific
 - ◆ Subject to oversight by fishery managers
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How Would AMOs Function?

- ◆ Most management authority would be provisionally granted to AMOs.
- ◆ AMOs given renewable right to a portion of TAC.
- ◆ Governing board chooses management mechanisms best suited to regional anglers, subject to compliance with TAC.
 - Open / Closed Seasons
 - Required “Fish Stamps/Tags”
 - Other Input / Output Controls

How Would AMOs Function?

- ◆ AMOs would ideally be self-financing. Mechanisms might include:
 - Sale of required fishing “tags” or “stamps”.
 - License sales.
 - Tournaments.
 - Auctioning of fishing or charter rights.
 - Membership fees.
- ◆ However, AMOs would be required to provide equal access to fishery participation (fees or restrictions could not be used to disenfranchise certain groups).


How Would AMOs Function?

- ◆ AMOs could be region specific—to respond to heterogeneous attributes of anglers in different regions (e.g. Eastern vs. Western Gulf Red Snapper)
- ◆ Initially, AMO shares would be distributed through an equitable process to current anglers. Once established, any person could become a shareholder by purchasing shares from existing shareholders.
- ◆ TAC granted to an AMO would be renewed each year, as long as AMO followed established rules.

How Would AMOs Function?

- ◆ An AMO violating rules (repeatedly exceeding TAC, failing to provide equal access) could have charter revoked or TAC reduced/revoked.
- ◆ If stock grows or recovers, AMOs might be rewarded with a greater TAC.
- ◆ Provides incentives for stewardship.
- ◆ Anglers would establish their own rules—strengthening voluntary compliance.

Expected Outcomes

- ◆ Management authority shared with anglers.
 - ◆ Strengthen resource stewardship.
 - ◆ Management better suited to needs of regional stakeholders.
 - ◆ Reduce enforcement & monitoring costs.
 - ◆ Alleviate management conflicts.
 - ◆ Greater long-term economic benefits.
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Coordination Details

- ◆ Many details of AMO/Council coordination and activities would have to be agreed upon prior to establishing AMOs.
- ◆ Cooperative process between Councils, angler representatives, other stakeholders.
- ◆ AMO concept provides a simple and compelling framework.
- ◆ Many challenging questions and issues remain.

Questions / Issues

- ◆ How would scientific research and data collection be funded and coordinated between AMOs and Councils?
- ◆ What if AMOs unable to raise sufficient funds for required management activities?
- ◆ Potentially high set-up and initial transactions costs.
- ◆ How would enforcement activities be coordinated between AMOs and Councils? What authority might be provided to AMOs to allow enforcement?

Questions / Issues

- ◆ Should AMOs have authority over larger or smaller geographical regions? (Perhaps start larger, and allow AMOs to subdivide if desired?)
- ◆ How to avoid simply adding “another layer of bureaucracy” to fishery management? Councils would have to give up provisional authority.
- ◆ Do recreational anglers really *want* to exercise management control over their own fisheries?

Conclusions

- ◆ AMOs offer one idea for introducing rights-based, region specific, co-management to recreational fisheries.
 - ◆ Practical application of such ideas requires the answering of many difficult questions.
 - ◆ But, current trends suggest clear costs/risks of maintaining the management status quo.
 - ◆ If not AMOs—what?
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