

Science, Service, Stewardship

**NOAA  
FISHERIES  
SERVICE**

**Recreational  
Saltwater Fisheries  
Action Agenda**

October 2010

NOAA



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Recreational Saltwater Fishing  
Action Agenda**

*Produced October 2010*

## **A Note from the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries**

The April 2010 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit marked the renewal of a conversation to help forge a stronger partnership through dialogue, and more importantly, through follow up action to address priority concerns of the recreational fishing community. Through an advance survey, expert presentations and small group discussions we asked the recreational fishing community to help NOAA develop a recreational fishing action agenda.

Participants highlighted a range of issues, including better catch, effort and economic data, improved and more regular communication regionally and nationally, and more consistent inclusion of recreational interests in management processes. Fishermen also asked us to focus on management approaches that recognize the distinct needs of recreational anglers for improved access, more time on the water and quality fishing experiences.

Also loud and clear was a focus on action. We heard loud and clear that it will be the strength of our subsequent actions that will be the ultimate measure of the Summit.

This Action Agenda is the immediate outcome of that exchange. It is a summary of Summit participants' work and ideas, and will serve as a roadmap for NOAA in fulfilling our commitments made at the Summit. This Action Agenda is not a plan intended to be shelved and occasionally dusted-off for review. Rather, it is a dynamic guide built on the input of Summit participants that details specific actions NOAA can and will take to improve resource stewardship. This Action Agenda includes a set of five priority "Signature Issues" with specific objectives for near-term action, and a larger set of longer term goals. The Action Agenda is national in scope, but acknowledges the need to develop and implement regional work plans that are closely linked with the goals of the national Action Agenda.

We are hard at work on many of these items and I am pleased to say we are already well on our way – with your help – to accomplishing a number of them. Please take a moment to review the agenda and let us know your thoughts. I look forward to continuing the conversation and working with you toward a bright future for fish, the recreational fishing community and coastal and ocean resources across the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Schwaab', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Eric Schwaab  
Assistant Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries Service

## INTRODUCTION

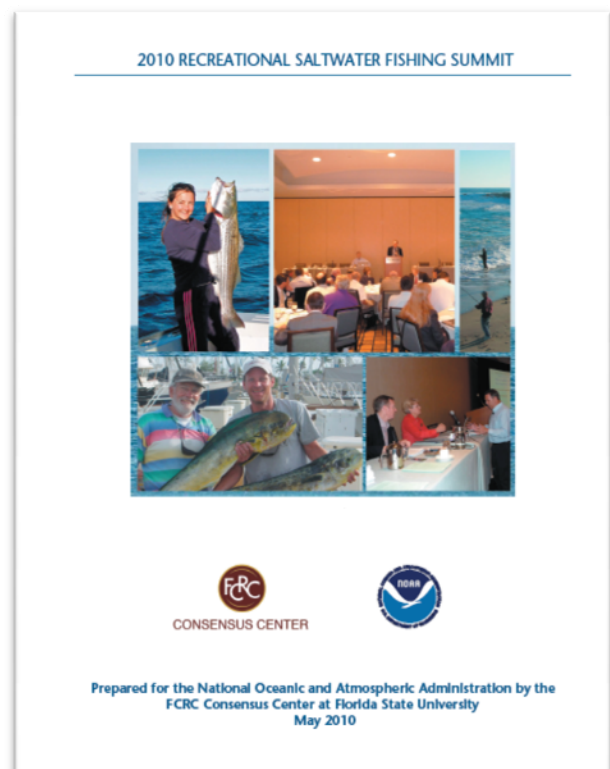
The Recreational Saltwater Fishing Action Agenda (Action Agenda) is NOAA's response to the ideas expressed by participants in the April 2010 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit. The Summit was recognition that sustainably managing our common ocean resources is a job best accomplished in partnership, and sought to strengthen the relationship between NOAA and the recreational saltwater fishing community.

The Summit's facilitated sessions provided a neutral, open, and productive forum where issues of critical importance could be identified, discussed, and prioritized by recreational constituents. The conversations brought focus to the most pressing issues including the quality and timeliness of recreational catch and effort data, recreational fishermen's role in catch share programs, and representation on regional fishery management bodies - as well as possible recommendations to address them. For its part, NOAA committed to carefully considering the participants' contributions, to develop a plan of action guided by information developed during the Summit, and to work in partnership with the recreational community to address their collective concerns.

These vision themes provide a loose framework upon which the Action Agenda is built. Further guided by the Summit's refined objectives and ranked actions, the Action Agenda continues the honest discussion begun at the Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit. It looks to build upon the progress made at the Summit by providing a plan of action that is already underway and will be used to guide NOAA Fisheries' efforts to partner with the recreational fishing community in the near future.

***Summit participants identified four broad visions of a successful future:***

1. Improved open communication, cooperation, and trusting interaction.
2. Improved robust, timely, and accurate data and science on fisheries, habitat and water quality.
3. Fishery management decisions based on a more complete understanding of the social and economic contributions of both the recreational and commercial saltwater fishing communities.
4. Ensure broad access to the greatest possible range of recreational fishing opportunities.



## **NEW ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

Dr. Lubchenco created three new support mechanisms to help facilitate constructive conversation and focused action.

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) and its Recreational Fishing Subcommittee serve as the Agency's advice and consensus building body. MAFAC's new **Recreational Fishing Working Group (RFG)** provides additional points of view from an array of national, regional and sector perspectives.

**NOAA Fisheries' internal recreational coordinators** provide regional and office-level points of contact and expertise on recreational fishing issues nationwide.

The **National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fishing** is a new position created to serve as a national point of contact and help the Agency solve problems.

NOAA is currently working to identify the roles and responsibilities of each of these resources and engage them in developing and carrying out the next steps.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Action Agenda will be a living document, sculpted by an ongoing dialogue with scientists, managers, and constituents. This initial draft of the Action Agenda outlines a number of initial engagement actions and a plan for working with federal advisory bodies, regional offices, and community members within the context of five specific themes.

While this initial Action Agenda is national in scope, NOAA Fisheries recognizes the benefit of developing regional work plans that are closely linked with the goals of the national Action Agenda and will do so. This will maximize NOAA Fisheries' ability to identify and address existing and emerging priorities of the recreational fishing community at the local and regional level.

Moving ahead, NOAA Fisheries will prioritize activities that:

- Generate immediate, impactful results to the fishing community;
- Focus on outcome rather than process improvements;
- Address important regional needs;
- Utilize and build upon existing programs that fit within vision themes versus starting new projects from scratch;
- Build public/private partnerships where ever possible in order to maximize limited financial and human resources.



## RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES

Although NOAA Fisheries is responsible for implementing much of the Action Agenda, the strategic agenda relies extensively on input and commitment from partner agencies, organizations, and individuals. This involves an honest exchange of ideas and back and forth discussion built on a foundation of trust and respect. NOAA Fisheries believes that an inclusive, proactive, collaborative approach will result in more lasting and acceptable change as well as better solutions to complex challenges.

NOAA will strive to:

- Provide opportunities for regular, two-way communication.
- Provide communications aimed at clearly answering constituent questions.
- Work within the confines of our legal mandates and established processes, but not use these systems as an excuse for being non-responsive or for failing to consider new ideas.
- Provide information to avoid surprises and ensure stakeholders are aware of the thinking behind Agency decisions.

NOAA Fisheries envisions its relationship with the recreational community as one in which people are confident in the integrity of the information they receive, in which stakeholders are engaged, and one that empowers partners in the science and management of our living marine resources.



# SIGNATURE ISSUES

Guided primarily by input from the recreational summit, NOAA Fisheries will focus on a **core group of five signature issues** at the outset of recreational engagement activities to maximize gains in key areas.

Focus on these signature issues will allow NOAA Fisheries to utilize staff in the most efficient means possible and effect tangible, positive change.

## 1. Ensure balanced representation on fishery management councils and advisory bodies.

### *Action Items:*

- Formalize input of National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fisheries in council appointment process.
- Secure recreational council appointments to achieve and maintain balance, as appropriate.
- Develop feedback mechanism to maintain balanced representation on councils and advisory bodies.

## 2. Integrate recreational fishing principles and values into the NOAA and NOAA Fisheries missions and cultures.

### *Action Items:*

- Appoint and actively engage the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) Recreational Working Group (RFGW).
- Incorporate recreational considerations into the NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan.
- Include recreational considerations in the next NOAA Fisheries Strategic Plan
- Expand ownership of recreational fishing issues by NOAA Fisheries regional offices through development of regional Action Agendas reflecting local priorities.
- Develop feedback mechanism to ensure timely development and implementation of regional Action Agendas.

## 3. Improve recreational socio-economic, catch, and effort data.

### *Action Items:*

- Continue toward full implementation of the Marine Recreational Information Program, including:
  - Implement electronic logbook pilot program to improve catch and effort data from for-hire vessels in the Gulf of Mexico.
  - Conduct a workshop in the fall of 2010 to describe methods for delivering estimates of recreational catch on a timelier basis—including reducing the length of sample intervals or “waves” from two months to one month-- and to assess tradeoffs in cost, precision and accuracy among identified methods.
  - Complete development of a new procedure for estimating angler catch from intercept survey data by January of 2011, and begin to apply the procedure to recreational surveys on the east and Gulf coasts. Review Pacific coast estimation procedures and develop improved estimation methods for those surveys, as well.
  - Complete pilot projects utilizing state angler license directories in dual frame mail and telephone surveys, evaluate results and compare



## SIGNATURE ISSUES

results to the Coastal Household Telephone Survey used in MRFSS. Based on the results, begin use of registries for surveys that collect trip and effort data in 2011.

- Continue implementation of the National Saltwater Angler Registry and develop a database to allow NOAA to more easily obtain data regarding recent recreational fishing activities.
- Implement the 2011 Marine Angler Expenditure Survey-- A nationwide survey of marine anglers in all coastal states to gather expenditures on trip-related costs and expenditures on durable fishing related goods.

### 4. Catch shares and allocation.

*Action Items:*

- Integrate recreational considerations in final catch share policy.
- Develop policy guidance and identify data needs for fishery management councils regarding allocation.

### 5. Cooperative research & monitoring.

*Action Items:*

- Engage recreational community in addressing barotrauma issues through a joint NOAA/stakeholder workshop.
- Engage recreational fishermen in BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill research and monitoring activities to assist in determining extent spill impacts.





## INITIAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS

The following goals, objectives, and actions are based primarily, but not exclusively, upon feedback received from participants of the 2010 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit. Specific identified actions are intended to be implemented or initiated on short and mid-term timeframes. As called for in the individual objectives and action items, more detailed plans will be developed.

### GOAL 1

#### *Improved recreational fishing opportunities*

**Objective: Identify and evaluate potential management alternatives that account for recreational values.**

- Coordinate with the National Marine Sanctuary Program staff to identify opportunities for adopting/expanding recreational fishing management goals/objectives.
- Engage NOAA, Council leadership, states, MAFAC and/or others, as appropriate, in a review of existing allocation process.
- Identify and publicize upcoming opportunities for NOAA and recreational constituent engagement in Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (e.g. regional planning teams, fishery management councils, etc.).

**Objective: Identify/develop management tools that work best for recreational fisheries.**

- Increase Council awareness of recreational considerations through integration of recreational considerations into NOAA-led Council member training.
  - Work with Council leadership, states, and NOAA Fisheries staff to evaluate pilot recreational catch share programs (e.g. Gulf of Mexico (GOM) red snapper).
  - Conduct a workshop(s) with fisheries managers and stakeholders to identify best management practices and incorporate economic and human dimension findings.
  - Work with NOAA Fisheries' Office of Habitat and non-NOAA entities to identify opportunities to improve/restore fish habitat.
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### GOAL 2

#### *Improved recreational catch, effort, and status data*

**Objective: Improve the accuracy, precision, and timeliness of recreational catch and effort data through the implementation of MRIP.**

- Implement electronic logbook pilot program to improve catch and effort data from for-hire vessels in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Conduct a workshop in the fall of 2010 to describe methods for delivering estimates of recreational catch on a timelier basis—including reducing the length of sample intervals or “waves” from two months to one month-- and to assess tradeoffs in cost, precision and accuracy among identified methods.
- Complete development of a new procedure for estimating angler catch from intercept survey data by January of 2011, and begin to apply the new procedure to recreational surveys on the east and Gulf coasts. Review Pacific coast estimation procedures and develop improved estimation methods for those surveys, as well.
- Complete pilot projects utilizing state angler license directories in dual

frame mail and telephone surveys, evaluate results and compare results to the Coastal Household Telephone Survey used in MRFSS. Based on the results, begin use of registries for surveys that collect trip and effort data in 2011.

- Secure input from the MAFAC Recreational Subcommittee and RFWG members on developing MRIP plans, priorities, and actions, including updates to the MRIP Implementation Plan; annual priorities for projects and project implementation; new policies and proposed standards and best practices; regional implementation priorities and choices from the MRIP menu.
- Schedule a comprehensive MRIP Web-Ex briefing for the MAFAC Subcommittee and RFWG members. Include identification of upcoming matters on which input from members will be sought, and a timetable for seeking these contributions. This should include, at a minimum, the following within the next six months: 2010 Implementation Plan Update-August; Report to Congress on MRIP Implementation Status-November/December; FY 2011 research and pilot project priorities-September; implementation of new estimation method to revise Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico estimates for 2003 to 2009-July.

**Objective: Increase the frequency of stock assessments of important recreational fishing stocks to support management needs.**

- Identify assessment schedule of top ten marine recreational species and work with NOAA leadership, science, and budget staff to accelerate assessment schedule of top ten marine recreational species, as appropriate.
- Work with NOAA leadership, science and budget staff to evaluate and increase data /assessment budgets for key recreational species Identify potential gaps and priority species.
- Communicate science budget and assessment schedule to recreational community (e.g. data workshops, webinars, etc.) as available.

### **GOAL 3**

#### ***Improved social and economic data on recreational fisheries***

**Objective: Review allocation process and goals and provide economic data suitable for managers to evaluate/make allocation and regulatory decisions.**

- Address recreational concerns/comments on allocation (and other issues) in NOAA Catch Share policy, as appropriate.
- Implement the 2011 Marine Angler Expenditure Survey-- A nationwide survey of marine anglers in all coastal states to gather expenditures on trip-related costs and expenditures on durable fishing related goods.
- Work with the Office of Science and Technology; conduct a gap analysis of current social and economic programs.
- Coordinate with stakeholders, NOAA economists, Council, and Commission staff to inventory management need for social and economic data.

**Objective: Understand the socio-economic impacts of Natural Disasters/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.**

- Work to ensure appropriate consideration of recreational fishing interests in relief/aid packages.
- Work with appropriate DOC/NOAA staff, fishery management councils, state agencies, academic institutions, and constituents to fully understand the socio-economic effects of the spill.

**Objective: Improve understanding of human dimensions of recreational fishing (e.g. angler satisfaction, motivations).**

- Evaluate state of current knowledge of human dimensions of recreational fishing.
  - Identify key needs and work with NOAA scientists, Council and Commission social scientists, and outside specialists in preparing a research agenda on human dimensions in marine recreational fishing.
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## GOAL 4

### Improved communication

**Objective: Ensure appropriately balanced stakeholder representation in a range of decision-making processes.**

- Review 2010 Fishery Management Council nomination packages with regard to inter-sector balance.
  - Engage MAFAC Recreational Fishing Working Group to identify preferred communications strategies/methods.
  - Identify ongoing initiatives (NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan, Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP, etc) and conduct communications to ensure recreational constituents are aware of opportunities to participate.
  - Develop strategy to actively engage recreational fishing constituents into CMSP dialogues.
- Evaluate current Advisory Panels (AP)(e.g. HMS AP, Advisory Committee for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, etc.) to ensure balanced representation
  - Identify and contact various recreational fishing AP members to serve as potential ambassadors and information disseminators.

**Objective: Establish regular and better communication with recreational fishermen.**

- Produce Summit follow-ups including final report, action agenda, Summit web video, and posting of other Summit documents on the NOAA website.
- Create calendar of upcoming recreational events and possible engagement opportunities for NOAA leadership and staff (e.g. Take-A-Kid Fishing Event, ICAST, etc).
  - Identify NOAA Participation in recreational fishing/fishery related events
  - Identify and participate in key recreational fisheries management activities (e.g. Fishery Management Council (FMC) meetings).
- Better engage/partner with state resource agencies in communications efforts.
- Develop a recreational fisheries communications and community outreach plan possibly including, but not limited to, the following:
  - Identify upcoming critical issues and decision points that may impact recreational fishing to ensure NOAA leadership and stakeholders are aware and understanding of various perspectives.
  - Create a recreational fishing constituent database with current contact information.
  - Elevate profile of Recreational Fishing Services website.
  - Contact recreational constituents via email and/or e-newsletter no less than quarterly.
  - Include regular recreational fishing updates in FishNews e-newsletter.
  - Identify and utilize possible internal communication opportunities and resources (e.g. Fostering Sustainable Fisheries Conference, library brown bags, regional office/science center open houses).

- Establish regular communications between NOAA internal recreational fisheries coordination team.
- Development of communications “tool kits” for NOAA staff on recreational issues.
- Proactively publicize MRIP activities and accomplishments.

**Objective: Increase the number of cooperative research opportunities and partnerships with recreational fishermen.**

- Engage recreational fishermen in BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill research and monitoring activities to assist in determining extent spill impacts, as appropriate.
- Engage recreational community in addressing barotrauma issues through a joint NOAA/stakeholder workshop.
- Inventory NOAA programs that provide cooperative research and partnership opportunities and create a process to engage with recreational fishermen on current and other future partnership needs and opportunities.
- Work with Office of Habitat Conservation to expand recreational stakeholder involvement in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

**GOAL 5**

***Institutional  
Orientation***

**Objective: Better integrate recreational values into NOAA/NOAA Fisheries’ core mission.**

- Ensure that the NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan specifically addresses marine recreational fishing.
- Include recreational considerations in the next NOAA Fisheries Strategic Plan.
- Identify budget opportunities to advance recreational fishing priorities, including improved socio-economic data collection, stock assessments of key species, and others.
- Consult with experts who have examined organizational culture and

mission priorities in other government organizations (e.g. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and determine strategies for assuring the organizational culture is aligned with the priorities of this initiative.





**Assistant Administrator for Fisheries**  
Eric Schwaab

[www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)

**NOAA Fisheries Service**  
1315 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910