

Science, Service, Stewardship



NOAA  
FISHERIES  
SERVICE

**NORTHEAST REGION  
Saltwater Recreational Fishing  
Action Agenda**

November 2011

NOAA



## A Message from the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

I am pleased to share with you the NOAA Fisheries' northeast regional saltwater recreational fishing action agenda for 2012. Prepared by regional NOAA Fisheries staff in consultation with members of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee's Recreational Fisheries Working Group and other members of the public, this plan follows through on commitments made in the National Recreational Fisheries Action Agenda to develop regional plans that focus on actions where you live and fish.

Since September 2009 when NOAA announced its commitment to a *Recreational Fisheries Engagement Initiative*, we have taken concrete actions to strengthen our ties with recreational fishermen across the nation. From appointing a new National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fisheries and nominating regional recreational fishing coordinators to hosting collaborative workshops on key issues and increasing our level of collaboration with our MAFAC advisors and anglers like you, we have worked to fulfill our commitments. These individual actions represent significant steps that build cooperation and create momentum.

These regional action plans are another step forward. The plans are organized around the five priority goals you identified during the 2010 Saltwater Recreational Fishing Summit. The objectives, activities, expected deliverables, and timelines reflect our best thinking on how we can make progress on the issues you raised.

Please take a moment to read through the plan, share it with your friends and colleagues, and let us know what you think. We would like to know because these action agendas are not an end in themselves, but rather a means-to-that-end we all seek – healthy fish stocks, vibrant and satisfying recreational fisheries, and a trusting relationship. We know that success will be judged not on the number of our promises, but on the strength of our actions and we encourage you to work with us as we work to implement the plans.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can best move forward together.

Sincerely,

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

Eric Schwaab  
Assistant Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries Service

## Executive Summary

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northeast Regional Office and Northeast Fisheries Science Center will carry out activities to support and enhance recreational fisheries under the guidance of the April 2010 NOAA Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit, and the October 2010 NMFS Recreational Saltwater Fisheries Action Agenda (National Action Agenda).

Following the 2010 Summit, NMFS developed the National Action Agenda, which has five major goals to improve service to the recreational fishing community:

1. Improved Recreational Fishing Opportunities
2. Improved Recreational Catch, Effort, and Stock Status Data
3. Improved Recreational Socio-economic Data
4. Improved Communication
5. Institutional Orientation

Our Northeast Region Recreational Fisheries Action Plan has action items under each of the five goals for late 2011 through 2012, and a few follow-up items related to mid-2011 actions. These action items include the major ongoing activities necessary to manage recreational fisheries, such as annual management specifications, major surveys, habitat reviews, and stock assessments. Also, most importantly, we have included a number of new items to improve our internal and external ability to better engage the recreational fishing community. Our action items will help achieve, on a regional basis, the five goals of the National Action Agenda. Items briefly described here are explained in more detail in the following sections of this action plan.

### **Under Goal 1, Improved Recreational Fishing Opportunities, we will:**

- Provide advice and guidance on artificial reef Special Management Zones.
- Improve fish passage in a number of Northeast rivers.
- Evaluate scup allocations, and implement a recreational allocation in the Atlantic mackerel fishery.
- Consult on and improve Essential Fish Habitat designations, and review areas of high habitat vulnerability.
- Conduct surveys, research, and assessments to better understand the biology and fish population science of species that support marine recreational fisheries.
- Provide comprehensive management in 2012 for recreational fisheries species and the forage fish that support them.

### **Under Goal 2, Improved Recreational Catch, Effort, and Stock Status Data, we will:**

- Offer expanded electronic logbook reporting to party/charterboats.
- Explore the potential to conduct a cooperative research party/charter marine survey.
- Hold recreational fisheries data user group meetings, and participate on the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program Recreational Fisheries Technical Committee.
- Assess stocks of important recreational fish.

### **Under Goal 3, Improved Recreational Socio-economic Data, we will:**

- Analyze survey design and survey data for the 2011 National Marine Recreational Fishing Expenditure Survey.
- Report on economic information related to Northeast party/charter boats.

- Conduct valuation and economic impact studies of recreational anglers.
- Contribute expertise for the design of the 2011/2012 National Marine Recreational Use Survey.
- Study how to best measure the economic value of saltwater fishing licenses.

**Under Goal 4, Improved Communication, we will:**

- Hold a region-wide recreational fisheries forum and sub-regional recreational fisheries informational meetings.
- Develop a recreational fishing web page and recreational fishing e-mail list.
- Support outreach and information activities for recreational fisheries data collection programs.
- Conduct recreational fisheries information activities at club, association, and fishing/boating events.
- Develop a recreational fishing habitat pamphlet.
- Distribute information and obtain feedback on the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Strategic Plan.
- Develop a sturgeon identification and release brochure.

**Under Goal 5, Institutional Orientation, we will:**

- Conduct in-house Action Plan awareness meetings.
- With the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hold a Northeast grants workshop. .
- Offer lectures on recreational fishing issues, and develop a presentation on Magnuson-Stevens Act fishery management as it relates to recreational fishing.
- Align the Action Plan with the NMFS strategic planning process.
- Coordinate recreational fishing support activities with other NOAA entities.

## Background

The April 2010 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit marked the renewal of a conversation with the recreational fishing community to help forge a stronger partnership through dialogue and follow-up action. Summit 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. The October 2010 Recreational Saltwater Fisheries Action Agenda (National Action Agenda) was the immediate outcome of that exchange.

In May 2011, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced that it would host seven Regional Action Plans (RAPs): Northeast (Maine-Virginia), Southeast (North Carolina-Texas, including the Caribbean), Southwest (California), Northwest (Oregon and Washington), Alaska, Pacific Islands, and Highly Migratory Species (Northeast and Southeast). These Regional Action Plans are intended to serve as publicly available roadmaps detailing regional priorities and objectives for addressing regional recreational fishing issues.

## Regional Overview

NMFS Northeast Regional Office (NERO) and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) administer NOAA's programs in the New England and Mid-Atlantic areas to manage living marine resources and their habitats, and to protect marine mammals and other threatened and endangered species. NERO implements conservation and management programs, and NEFSC provides scientific advice and much of the scientific information on which the conservation programs and management are based. Together they maintain programs that support management of Northeast marine fish stocks to achieve optimum yield and to provide the greatest overall benefit to the Nation, particularly with respect to food production and recreational opportunities, and taking into account the protection of marine ecosystems.

For recreational fisheries, the Region works with the Regional Fishery Management Councils (and the states to maintain sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries from Maine through North Carolina, and in some cases implements fisheries regulations along the entire East Coast (Maine through the east coast of Florida). Together, these entities manage important marine recreational fisheries for cod, haddock, many flounders, Atlantic bluefish, black sea bass, and scup; they are also responsible for the management of other recreationally caught and/or forage species such as Atlantic sea herring, Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish that provide an important food source for recreationally sought-after species such as striped bass, tuna, and sharks. The Region is also responsible for the management of spiny dogfish and Northeast skates, which support commercial fisheries, play an important role in the Northeast marine ecosystem, and are frequently encountered by Northeast recreational anglers.

The marine recreational fisheries that take place throughout the Region are an important economic activity, with 24.6 million fishing trips taking place in 2009. NOAA's 2009 fisheries economic study estimated the marine recreational fishing trips and their related expenditures for New England at \$1.8 billion, and for the Mid-Atlantic at \$3.5 billion. This provides a total of \$5.3 billion in economic activity for Northeast coastal state economies. Recreational fishing also offers the citizens of and visitors to the Northeast coast special experiences that can enrich their lives by giving them close contact with the ocean and the complex web of life it supports. These experiences can foster an appreciation for conservation of sea life, and provide insight into the types of programs required to maintain and protect fisheries and the habitat supporting them.

The Region is committed to working with the recreational fishing community—a group with keen interest in and knowledge of our marine fisheries—to better understand their perspectives and needs, and to positively engage them in the development and conduct of programs that affect recreational fisheries.

The Region's Action Plan is based on the relationship principles as defined in the National Action Agenda, which are that 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.

The National Action Agenda is national in scope, but acknowledges the need to implement regional work plans closely linked to it. The Action Plan includes the major ongoing activities conducted by the Region that are necessary to manage recreational fisheries such as annual management specifications, major surveys, habitat reviews, and stock assessments. Most importantly, it also includes a number of new and/or revitalized items to improve our internal and external ability to manage recreational fisheries. Many of the items are designed to better engage the recreational fisheries community in that process. The intent of the action items, ongoing and new, is to help achieve, on a regional basis, the five goals of the National Action Agenda:

1. Improved Recreational Fishing Opportunities
2. Improved Recreational Catch, Effort, and Stock Status Data
3. Improved Recreational Socio-economic Data
4. Improved Communication
5. Institutional Orientation

In the following sections of the Action Plan, individual action items for the Region are listed by project number under each of the National Action Agenda's five goals.

## Goals and Objectives

### GOAL 1: Improve Recreational Fishing Opportunities

**Objective** ► Reduce user conflicts on artificial reefs in Federal waters.

**Project** ► Special management zones (SMZs) for sportfish restoration funded artificial reefs (NERO Lead)

Oversee and participate in the Mid-Atlantic Council's efforts to use the SMZ mechanism and its new reef monitoring committee formulated under provisions of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to review information on and recommend actions to reduce recreational/commercial conflicts for five artificial reefs in Federal waters off the coast of Delaware. These reefs are state-built, using U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration (SFR) funds, and recreational fishing groups contend that proliferation of commercial lobster pots and fish traps on reefs in

the Mid-Atlantic are interfering with recreational fishing on SFR-funded reefs. Reducing recreational/commercial conflicts could lead to improved recreational access and increased recreational fishing opportunities for these artificial reefs.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Participate in the development of measures to reduce user conflicts between recreational and commercial fishing on artificial reefs, and, if necessary, publish Federal regulations to implement such measures.

**Timing** ▶▶ The formulation of the reef monitoring committee and initial informational meetings will take place in 2012. Recommendations from the committee are expected in 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Ensure that proposals to allocate scup fully consider the needs of all stakeholders.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Evaluate recreational/commercial allocation in the scup fishery under the Mid-Atlantic Council process (NERO Lead).**

The Mid-Atlantic Council has funded a study to examine the scup allocation between recreational and commercial fisheries. NERO will work with the Council to ensure the data collected and any study recommendations used for management meet Magnuson-Stevens Act standards of using the best scientific information, are fair and equitable to all fishermen, are reasonably calculated to promote conservation, and are carried out in such manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges. This will provide a sound basis for any recommended scup fishery allocations, and optimize changes in the sustainable use of the resource for the Nation.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Review of the scup allocation report, and oversight of any Council recommendations to reallocate the recreational/commercial scup allocation.

**Timing** ▶▶ This study report is expected to be completed by the end of 2011, and information and methods developed through the study will be used by the Council to evaluate other fishery allocations in future years.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Ensure that Atlantic mackerel are allocated to the recreational fishery.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Provide for a recreational allocation in the Atlantic mackerel fishery (NERO Lead)**

Approve and implement the Mid-Atlantic Council's Amendment 11, which adds a designated recreational Atlantic mackerel allocation to the Council's Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. The Council has submitted Amendment 11, and NMFS is reviewing it to ensure it meets Magnuson-Stevens Act and other Federal standards. If so, NMFS will implement the amendment through the Federal regulatory process. Establishing a specific recreational fishery allocation in the Atlantic mackerel fishery will provide for continued access to the resource for the recreational community and help manage and maintain the fishery at sustainable levels with a formal allocation to the recreational sector. Maintaining sustainable levels of stocks and a recreational fishery allocation will help provide increased recreational fishing opportunities.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Recreational Atlantic mackerel allocation.

**Timing** ▶▶ Implement final measures through approval of Amendment 11 and the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP specification process in late 2011.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Increase spawning and nursery area for anadromous species.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Improve fish passage for the Saco River, ME, and Hudson River, NY (NERO and NEFSC)**

Conduct work and oversee implementation of fish passage measures under two settlement agreements regarding Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of six hydropower projects—five on the Saco River, ME, and the Green Island Hydropower project on the Hudson River, NY—to improve fish passage. Improved fish passage will provide more spawning and nursery habitat for Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, and American eels. These species support recreational fisheries and/or provide a forage base for other estuarine and marine recreational fish stocks. Providing them more and/or better habitat will help increase their populations and enhance the recreational fisheries they support.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Oversight of schedule and implementation of fish passage measures within two settlement agreements.

**Timing** ▶▶ These are long-term projects involving upstream and downstream passage work over the next decade. Planning and baseline information collection for upstream passage at two dams and downstream passage at one dam on the Saco River will take place in FY 2011. Project recommendations for alterations of fish passage at three sites on the Saco River will be completed by the end of FY 2012. Work on further improvements will take place in future years. All work at the Green Island project will take place in future years.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Increase spawning and nursery area for anadromous species.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Dam removal and fish passage projects in the Northeast Region (Northeast Restoration Center Lead)**

Provide funding and technical assistance to organizations throughout the Northeast Region to complete dam removal and fish passage projects to enhance passage for river herring, American shad, and American eel. These projects will restore access to approximately 150 stream miles and 1,700 acres of historic spawning habitat for river herring and American shad, and juvenile and adult habitat for American eel, thereby enhancing the potential for increasing the populations of these species. Increasing the river habitat and populations of these species will help improve recreational fishing opportunities in the fisheries they support and provide a bait supply (river herring and eels) for recreational fishing and a forage base for larger recreational fish species.

*Table 1 Northeast Restoration Office Dam/Fish Passage Projects*

Dam removal and fish passage projects – 2011-2012 Northeast Region		
STATE	PROJECT NAME	RIVER
ME	Great Works dam removal	Penobscot River
ME	Savage Wildlife Preserve dam removal	Shoreys Brook
NH	Winnicut dam removal and fish passage	Winnicut River
NH	Bunker dam removal	Lamprey River
MA	Wapping Road dam removal	Jones River
MA	Wellingsley Brook dam removal	Wellingsely Brook
RI	Horsehoe Falls fish passage	Pawcatuck River
RI	Kenyon dam removal	Pawcatuck River
RI	Hunts Mill fish passage	Ten Mile River
RI	Turner Reservoir fish passage	Ten Mile River
RI	Omega Pond fish passage	Ten Mile River



CT	Tingue dam fish by-pass	Naugatuck River
CT	Wallace dam removal	Quinnipiac River
CT	West River tide gates	West River
NJ	Finesville dam removal	Mustconetcong River

**Deliverable** ►► Completion of 15 dam removal and fish passage projects (Table 1) to improve river herring, American shad, and American eel passage to spawning and rearing habitats throughout the region.

**Timing** ►► The Gulf Council plans to make a decision on this action by early 2012, so changes to the management strategy will be effective before the June 1, 2012 season opening.

**Objective** ►► **Protect important recreational fish habitat.**

**Project** ►► **Improved Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) designations and review of areas of high habitat vulnerability (NERO and NEFSC).**

Work with the Councils to conduct analyses to refine EFH and identify areas of high habitat vulnerability to different types of fishing gear. In New England, assist with the development and analysis of alternatives to protect fish stocks as part of the New England Council's EFH Omnibus Amendment. In the Mid-Atlantic, the NERO will provide technical assistance in development of the EFH provisions of the Bluefish FMP. Improved habitat protection will help rebuild and maintain productivity of a variety of fish stocks such as cod, haddock, flounders, bluefish, and the recreational fisheries supported by them

**Deliverable** ►► Technical assistance to New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils regarding EFH.

**Timing** ►► New England's EFH Omnibus Amendment—Analysis of habitat areas to identify high areas of habitat vulnerability will take place in 2011, and identification of alternatives for fishery management consideration by the New England Council will take place in 2012. The Mid-Atlantic EFH update for the Bluefish FMP will take place in 2012.

**Objective** ►► **Meet NOAA's regulatory responsibilities for managing recreational species under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.**

**Project** ►► **Summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish fisheries annual recreational fishing specifications (NERO Lead).**

The Mid-Atlantic Council has funded a study to examine the scup allocation between recreational and commercial fisheries. NERO will work with the Council to ensure the data collected and any study recommendations used for management meet Magnuson-Stevens Act standards of using the best scientific information, are fair and equitable to all fishermen, are reasonably calculated to promote conservation, and are carried out in such manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges. This will provide a sound basis for any recommended scup fishery allocations, and optimize changes in the sustainable use of the resource for the Nation.

**Deliverable** ►► Monitor the fisheries and publish regulations for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish fisheries annual recreational fishing specifications, and implement the specifications through the Federal regulatory process.

**Timing** ►► Implement recreational fishing measures for each species as soon as possible in 2012.

**Objective ▶▶ Prevent overfishing on recreational fish stocks.****Project ▶▶ Protect recreational fish stocks by instituting Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)/Accountability Measures (AMs) to prevent overfishing (NERO Lead).**

Work cooperatively with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils to develop and monitor ACLs/AMs for key recreational fish stocks (summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, and multispecies recreational stocks). Provide recommendations to ensure the Mid-Atlantic Council's Omnibus Amendment for ACLs and AMs and the New England Council's multispecies ACL and AM actions meet Magnuson-Stevens Act and other Federal standards, and implement any needed ACL/AM actions through the Federal regulatory process. This will protect these stocks from overfishing while maintaining them at or rebuilding them to sustainable levels. High stock levels will help maximize recreational fishing opportunities.

**Deliverable ▶▶** Implement and monitor 2011/12 ACLs/AMs for Northeast recreational fish stocks in 2011/12.

**Timing ▶▶** A mechanism to implement ACLs/AMs, for recreational fisheries managed under New England FMPs was put in place in 2010, and a proposed rule with ACLs/AMs for the Mid-Atlantic Council stocks was published in June. Review and implementation of Mid-Atlantic measures will take place for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish in late 2011 and 2012, and monitoring of New England multispecies recreational fisheries for any necessary ACL/AM action will also be carried out in late 2011 and 2012.

**Objective ▶▶ Protect forage species and monitor and reduce bycatch of species important to the recreational fishing community (NERO Lead).****Project ▶▶ Protect forage species and monitor and reduce bycatch of species important to the recreational fishing community (NERO Lead).**

NERO will work cooperatively with the New England Council on Atlantic herring and with the Mid-Atlantic Council on mackerel, squid, and butterfish to ensure these stocks are maintained at healthy levels, that bycatch of recreationally important species is minimized, and that the important role they play within the ecosystem as forage for important recreational species is considered. Improved monitoring and reporting will be proposed for the Atlantic herring fishery, and measures to address bycatch and improve management in the Atlantic herring fishery and the mackerel, squid, and butterfish fishery are under development in Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring FMP, and under review in Amendment 11 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. Improved reporting in the Atlantic herring fishery and better methods to address bycatch and monitor their stock status will ensure that conservation and management measures will prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery. Encouraging an ecosystem approach to manage these fisheries will help maintain fishing opportunities on these species, and other higher level recreational fish species that depend on them as a food source.

**Deliverable ▶▶** Monitor the Atlantic herring, mackerel, squid, and butterfish resources and fisheries to ensure that overfishing is prevented, and reduce bycatch of other recreationally important species.

**Timing ▶▶** This is an ongoing activity, with monitoring of fisheries and any needed actions to be implemented in late 2011 or in 2012. A rule to implement improved reporting in the Atlantic herring fishery was proposed in June 2011; Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring FMP is under development by the New England Council; and Amendment 11 to the Atlantic

Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP has been submitted by the Mid-Atlantic Council and is under review by NMFS.

**Objective** ▶ Reduce negative impacts of proposed projects on fish habitat.

**Project** ▶ Improve habitat protections through consultation with Federal agencies proposing to impact EFH and other living marine resources (NERO Lead).

NERO will conduct consultations with Federal agencies (such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway Administration, and Department of the Interior) that fund, authorize, or undertake activities that may adversely affect EFH and other NOAA trust resources throughout the Northeast Region. Such actions include energy development, roadway and bridge construction, dredging, port expansion, and coastal development. Improved habitat protection within the ocean, estuaries, and rivers will help rebuild and maintain a variety fish stocks such as cod, haddock, flounders, striped bass, black sea bass, bluefish, sharks, and tuna, and will help enhance the recreational fisheries they support.

**Deliverable** ▶ EFH Consultations with Federal agencies.

**Timing** ▶ Ongoing.

## GOAL 2: Improve Recreational Catch, Effort, and Status Data

**Objective** ▶ Provide a more timely and efficient reporting system to party/charter vessels.

**Project** ▶ Electronic logbook reporting by for-hire vessels (NERO Lead)

An optional program for electronic logbook reporting by for-hire vessels in the Northeast multispecies fishery has recently been partially brought online so that for-hire vessels can file "did-not-fish" trip reports. NERO is working to expand the capability of the program to accept electronic fishing trip reports for all trips by for-hire vessels. Weekly logbook reporting is a requirement for all commercial vessels, including party and charter boats, fishing under a Northeast Multispecies Fishing Permit. The paper logbook reporting system is a time-consuming weekly paper fill-in and mail-in requirement. A new optional electronic reporting mechanism has been developed to reduce the physical reporting burden for vessels, and increase the timeliness of reporting. Electronic reporting in the party/charter fishery will help ensure that the data collected are timely and fully used.

**Deliverable** ▶ Electronic logbook reporting by for-hire vessels in the Northeast multispecies fishery.

**Timing** ▶ The first phase for this program was implemented in 2011 for the for-hire vessels with multispecies permits, who can now file weekly "did-not-fish" reports electronically through the new Northeast Region Fish-on-Line electronic reporting system. The option to report all multispecies trips through Fish-on-Line will be made available to for-hire vessels before the end of 2012.

**Objective** ▶ Design a project that will involve party/charter vessels in cooperative research.

**Project** ▶ Workshop on fixed-gear survey techniques and the potential to conduct a cooperative research party/charter marine recreational based survey (NEFSC Lead)

Stock assessments typically use abundance estimates derived from fishery-independent surveys. Most of these surveys use mobile commercial fishing gear, such as otter trawls. However, many species are not readily caught by mobile fishing gear, and many habitats are

not amenable to trawl survey techniques. Marine recreational anglers fishing from party and/or charter vessels may be a promising source of survey information. Along the U.S. West Coast, hook-and-line surveys for bocaccio rockfish have been conducted by NMFS, and a recent study ([www.elsevier.com/locate/fisheries](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/fisheries)) presented survey field methods and analytical processes of a survey that uses fishing gear similar to that used by many recreational anglers participating in near-shore or off-shore recreational charter cruises. The NEFSC and its Northeast Cooperative Research Program (NCRP) convened a workshop on July 12 and 13, 2011, to explore fixed-gear survey techniques and the potential to conduct a party/charter marine recreational based survey. The workshop results will be used in a guidance document to help develop standardized fishery-independent recreational surveys in the Gulf of Maine, southern New England, and Mid-Atlantic regions. Identification of survey methods; a list of primary species to target; spatial and temporal sampling frames; and collaborative processes among party/charter industry, NMFS scientists, and academic or research institutions were discussed. Funding mechanisms were also explored. Any resulting recommendations on how the NCRP can be used to supplement and improve collection of recreational fisheries information through the NMFS Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) will be forwarded to NMFS program managers and recreational fisheries leaders.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Guidance on the use of party and/or charter vessels in marine recreational fishery-independent surveys.

**Timing** ▶▶ The workshop was held in Narragansett, Rhode Island, on July 12-13, 2011, to produce a guidance document in late 2011.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Keep users of MRIP data informed of program updates and changes.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Northeast MRIP User Group (NERO and NEFSC)**

The NERO Recreational Fisheries Coordinator will organize and host a semi-annual Northeast Recreational Data Users Group (Recreational Data Group) conference call/webinar for state, Council, NEFSC, and NERO personnel who use MRIP data. With staff from the NMFS Office of Science and Technology, the group will address recent implementations of MRIP initiatives, such as the implementation of improved estimation procedures, changes to field surveys, angler registry implementation, coordination of MRIP for-hire survey and the Northeast Party/Charterboat logbook program, and information exchange on the Northeast Research Set-Aside Program and MRIP for-hire survey activities. The group will discuss the coordination of MRIP and Regional programs that collect information on recreational fishing and provide feedback to MRIP and Regional management on how well these activities support the Region's ability to manage recreational fisheries.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Semi-annual information on MRIP to Northeast MRIP data users and advice to MRIP program managers on the implications of MRIP actions.

**Timing** ▶▶ The Northeast MRIP Users Group has met several times since 2009. The goal for the next few years, because MRIP and the Region are in the process of implementing a number of new initiatives for collecting recreational fisheries information, is to have a spring and fall meeting each year. The next meeting is planned for fall 2011.

**Objective** ▶ Provide advice and information on data needs for the management of Federal recreational fishing programs.

**Project** ▶ Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Recreational Fisheries Technical Committee (NERO and NEFSC)

Participate on the Recreational Fisheries Technical Committee, an Atlantic Coast-wide committee of state, Council, and Federal representatives who review and make recommendations on adjustments and improvements to Atlantic Coast recreational fisheries data collection programs. The ACCSP is a comprehensive state/Federal fisheries data collection body. The activities of the group ensure that local perspectives on recreational fisheries programs are taken into account when planning coast-wide data collection programs, and provide for a strong state/Federal dialog when designing programs to collect information on recreational fisheries.

**Deliverable** ▶ Recommendations to the ACCSP Recreational Fisheries Technical Committee.

**Timing** ▶ This is an ongoing activity.

**Objective** ▶ Provide the scientific information necessary to assess and manage recreational fish stocks.

**Project** ▶ Survey and research to understand the biology and stock dynamics of important species supporting marine recreational fisheries (NEFSC Lead)

The NEFSC collects baseline data and biological information, and conducts research on recreational fish species using numerous methods, such as trawl surveys, Apex Predator Program, cooperative research, and the marine ecosystem program. These methods provide information useful to the management of many important recreational fish species such as tuna, sharks, striped bass, bluefish, cod, haddock, flounders, black sea bass, Atlantic herring, Atlantic mackerel, butterfish, and squid. This baseline information forms the basis for stock assessments and provides other biological information used to manage these species at sustainable levels, and thus maintain the recreational fishing opportunities they support.

**Deliverable** ▶ Baseline data and biological reports on recreational species.

**Timing** ▶ This is a core ongoing activity of the NEFSC, with numerous activities carried out and reports issued throughout each year.

**Objective** ▶ Produce accurate stock status assessments for recreational fish stocks.

**Project** ▶ Conduct improved stock assessments for black sea bass, Gulf of Maine cod, and three stocks of winter flounder (NEFSC Lead)

Black sea bass, cod, and winter flounder support important Northeast recreational fisheries. The NEFSC will collect the latest information on black sea bass; Gulf of Maine cod; and Georges Bank, Gulf of Maine, and Southern New England winter flounder and, using the best scientific information available, conduct new peer-reviewed stock assessments for these five stocks. The resulting information for black sea bass will be provided to the Mid-Atlantic Council, and the Gulf of Maine cod and winter flounder information will be provided to the New England Council for use in the development of fishery management actions. The results will also be published, and provided to the NERO and NMFS Headquarters for use in agency stock status decisions and reports. New assessments for these species will help sustain fisheries, prevent overfishing, and maintain fishing opportunities.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Improved stock assessments and stock status reports for black sea bass, Gulf of Maine cod, and winter flounder.

**Timing** ▶▶ Provide the winter flounder and new black sea bass assessment information in late 2011, and the new Gulf of Maine cod information in 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Give priority to conducting stock assessments on the recreational fish stocks with the most important immediate needs.

**Project** ▶▶ **Prioritization of stock assessments for important recreational fish stocks (NERO and NEFSC)**

NERO and NEFSC will coordinate priority-setting for stock assessments for recreational fish stocks and other key stocks by participating in the bi-annual meetings of the Northeast Coordinating Council (NRCC), made up of leadership members from NERO, NEFSC, Commission, and Councils. Priority-setting of stock assessments among Northeast fisheries management groups will ensure that recreational fish stocks with the most urgent need for new assessment information will be given full consideration, and will have the best available information applied to their management. Recreational stocks recently prioritized for assessments are three winter flounder stocks (currently undergoing the final stages of new stock assessment work), black sea bass, Gulf of Maine cod, and Georges Bank cod.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Stock assessments for important recreational fish stocks.

**Timing** ▶▶ Stock assessment schedules and priorities are reviewed twice a year by the NRCC. The next NRCC meeting is planned for the October 2011.

### GOAL 3: Improve Social and Economic Data on Recreational Fisheries

**Objective** ▶▶ Collection of accurate and comprehensive information on the value of marine recreational fisheries.

**Project** ▶▶ **2011 Angler Expenditure Survey**

This survey is currently underway in the Northeast and across the rest of the Nation. This is the third time we have administered a detailed marine angler expenditure survey in the Northeast. Results of the first two surveys in 1998 and 2006 are available online at [http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/RecFishEcon\\_pubs.html](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/RecFishEcon_pubs.html). The primary purpose of this survey is to evaluate state-level estimates of angler expenditures and the financial impacts (direct, indirect, and induced) of the expenditures in each region and nationally. The resulting expenditure and impact estimates provide the foundation for most of the economic assessments completed by NMFS economists across the Nation.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Provide survey design and survey data analysis to gain greater understanding of marine recreational fishing economic contributions to society.

**Timing** ▶▶ Survey design and data collection will take place in 2011, and data analysis will take place in 2012. The final report will be produced in 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Obtain improved economic information on party/charter recreational fishing boats.

**Project** ▶▶ **For-Hire Cost/Earnings Survey in the Northeast Region (NEFSC Project)**

The NEFSC designed a voluntary survey to collect cost/earnings data from the party/charter fishing vessels and is responsible for project management and oversight. Personal interviews were conducted to collect annual trip and fixed-cost expenditures, business structure information, annual effort data, demographic data, and limited attitudinal information from for-hire owners operating out of New England and the Mid-Atlantic. NMFS is required by law to

examine the economic impacts of proposed fishery policies. Currently, little information is available about the business structure, costs, and returns of for-hire fishing businesses in the Northeast region. This effort should help NMFS economists at the NEFSC and Council staff economists to determine the importance of this industry to the Northeast region's economy and to adequately address the economic impacts of proposed management actions on this industry.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Report on cost/earnings for Northeast party/charter recreational fishing boats for use by the Councils in economic evaluations of recreational fisheries.

**Timing** ▶▶ This survey began in January 2011 and was completed in August 2011. Northeast Region Recreational Fisheries Coordinators will begin disseminating results in fall 2011.

**Objective** ▶▶ Obtain improved economic information on the recreational groundfish fishery.

**Project** ▶▶ Valuation and Economic Impact Study of Recreational Groundfish Anglers in the Northeast Region (NEFSC Lead).

This study is based on data collected through a NMFS Headquarters-funded project in 2009. A "respondents choice" experimental mail survey was conducted as an add-on to the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics (MRFSS) survey from Maine through New Jersey in 2009 and 2010. Following the data collection program, a bio-economic model of recreational angling in the Northeast groundfish fishery was constructed to quantify the effects of various regulatory scenarios on angler effort, catch, expenditures, and welfare in the Northeast. A regional input-output model also was constructed to examine the impact of alternative regulatory scenarios on the wider regional economy (jobs, income, and sales). These models will be used in future economic assessments of changes in recreational management measures for groundfish.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Models will be used in future economic assessments of changes in recreational management measures for Northeast groundfish.

**Timing** ▶▶ Completed models are expected by the end of 2011.

**Objective** ▶▶ Provide economic information on the recreational fishery to allow for informed management decisions.

**Project** ▶▶ Valuation and Economic Impact Study of Recreational Summer Flounder, Black Sea Bass, and Scup Anglers in the Northeast Region (NEFSC Lead)

This study is similar to the above groundfish study, but will focus on summer flounder, black sea bass, and scup. The project was funded by Headquarters in 2010 and the angler data are still being collected in the field during FY 2011. Slight changes to the respondents choice experimental survey, based on the groundfish survey, were made, but the same type of bio-economic model will be constructed to estimate the effects of regulatory changes on total angler effort (i.e., number of trips taken by anglers), catch (number of fish that will be kept and released), expenditures (total costs of angler purchases), and welfare (willingness to pay and consumer surplus).

**Deliverable** ▶▶ An economic model to estimate the effects of regulatory changes on total angler effort for summer flounder, black sea bass, and scup fisheries.

**Timing** ▶▶ Completed models are expected by the end of FY 2011.

**Objective** ▶▶ Provide for an accurate and precise recreational use survey.

**Project** ▶▶ 2011/2012 National Marine Recreational Use Survey (NEFSC Lead)

NEFSC is working closely with NMFS Headquarters to lay the groundwork for this survey. Funded by Headquarters, this large and comprehensive survey will be conducted across the Nation beginning in 2012. The purpose is to collect data for quantifying expenditures on ocean-dependent recreational activities in the United States, particularly those activities that interact with marine resources falling within the scope of NOAA's public trust responsibilities. Ocean-dependent recreational activities include many activities besides recreational fishing, such as boating, wildlife watching, swimming, beach activities, kayaking, snorkeling, and scuba diving. The economic information provided from the survey will help inform fishery managers about ocean-related recreational expenditure patterns and contribute to a better understanding of public participation in these activities. The data collected may also be useful for marine spatial planning. Measures of economic performance that may be supported by this data collection include: (1) contribution to net national benefits derived from marine recreational sources; (2) contribution to income groups in industries that support ocean-dependent recreational activities; and (3) regional economic impacts (income and employment).

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Contribute expertise to the design of a National Marine Recreational Use Survey to improve accuracy and precision on estimates of recreational fishing parameters.

**Timing** ▶▶ Input and consultations with Headquarters on the design and implementation of the survey will continue through 2011 and 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Estimation of the "true" value of marine saltwater licenses in Massachusetts.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Measuring the Economic Value of Saltwater Fishing Licenses in Massachusetts (NEFSC Lead)**

This study was recently funded by NMFS Headquarters. It was designed by the NEFSC, who will provide technical monitoring for the national survey. Collection of saltwater angler expenditure information is taking place during 2011 in every U.S. coastal state. The data from the Massachusetts study will help NOAA economists estimate how much people value the opportunity to go saltwater fishing in each coastal state in the Nation. The results of the survey should shed light on the likely "true" value of marine saltwater licenses in Massachusetts and provide data for other researchers to gain further insights into the accuracy of estimating recreation values.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Report estimating the value of marine saltwater licenses in Massachusetts.

**Timing** ▶▶ Project start-up work began in 2011, and the project will be completed in 2012. Northeast Regional Recreational Fishing Coordinators will assist in outreach and dissemination of results.

#### Goal 4: Improve Communication

**Objective** ▶▶ **Direct interaction of NERO/NEFSC leadership with the recreational fisheries community.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Northeast Region annual recreational fisheries forum (NERO Lead)**

NERO will host an annual region-wide recreational fisheries forum (coordinated by the Northeast Recreational Fisheries Coordinator) where senior personnel will discuss recreational fisheries issues with representatives from the Northeast recreational fisheries community. Preferably, the forum will be held in conjunction with one of the Council or



Commission meetings. A Recreational Forum Steering Committee will be formed to set up the forum and seek input on the forum's agenda from the recreational fishing community.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Annual Northeast recreational fisheries forum.

**Timing** ▶▶ Formation of the Steering Committee and planning for the forum will start in FY 2011, and the first forum will be held in FY 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Obtain direct sub-regional feedback on the Action Plan.

**Project** ▶▶ Sub-regional Northeast Region recreational fisheries information meetings (NERO Lead)

In addition to an annual recreational fisheries forum, the Northeast Recreational Fishing Coordinator will organize two sub-regional fisheries information meetings (preferably held at recreational fishing organization events or aligned with fisheries management meetings). These meetings will focus on gathering feedback from the recreational fisheries community on the Action Plan and other current sub-regional recreational fishing issues of concern.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ One meeting will be held in the New England area and the other in the Mid-Atlantic area.

**Timing** ▶▶ Planning for the meetings will take place in 2011, and the meetings will be held during the first half of 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Improve awareness and understanding of NOAA decisions and activities affecting recreational fishing through web-based information.

**Project** ▶▶ Development of recreational fishing web pages (NERO and NEFSC)

Although NERO and NEFSC post many items of interest to the recreational fishing community on their web pages, these items are not always found by members of the recreational fishing community. An easily recognizable recreational fishing site will be set up for NERO and NEFSC, with a direct link to the NMFS Headquarters recreational fishing webpage.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Recreational fishing site on the web pages of NERO and NEFSC.

**Timing** ▶▶ Recreational web pages will be set up by the end of FY 2011.

**Objective** ▶▶ Generate goodwill within the recreational fishing community by improving information flow to recreational fishing associations and clubs.

**Project** ▶▶ E-mail list of Northeast recreational fishing associations and clubs (NERO Lead)

In FY 2011, NERO compiled an e-mail list of recreational fishing associations and clubs having an interest in the Region's management actions, and the Regional Recreational Fisheries Coordinator sends e-mails to them on key management actions likely to affect the recreational fishing community. The list will be updated and made more comprehensive, and e-mail notices to organizations about recreational fisheries actions will continue.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Build and maintain a comprehensive e-mail list of Northeast recreational fishing associations and clubs.

**Timing** ▶▶ E-mail activity will continue in FY 2011 and FY 2012. The e-mail list will be updated at least every 6-months.

**Objective** ▶▶ Direct communication with the fishing and boating public.

**Project** ▶▶ Special outreach at recreational fishing/boating events (NERO and NEFSC)

NERO and NEFSC will cooperatively host a booth at the New England Saltwater Fishing Show and at another fishing/boating event each year (coordinated by the Northeast Recreational Fisheries Coordinators) to provide information on NOAA services and actions. Fisheries regulations, protected species programs, habitat protection activities, and NOAA weather and science information of interest to saltwater boaters and fishermen will be highlighted. In addition, NERO will partner with other NOAA offices and state agencies to conduct outreach efforts on the National Saltwater Angler Registry and regional NOAA programs, and to promote ocean literacy and ethical angling at fishing and boating shows and other recreational fishing-related events in New England and the Mid-Atlantic.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Outreach activities at recreational fishing events.

**Timing** ▶▶ In 2011, the NERO hosted a booth at the New England Saltwater Fishing Show, partnered with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on outreach activities at the New England Outdoor Exposition and the Boston Boat Show, participated with the USFWS on a family fishing day event, and conducted outreach on MRIP with several fishing clubs/associations. Similar activities are planned for fall 2011 through 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Facilitate information flow on recreational fishing data collection programs.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Support MRIP outreach and information activities within the Northeast Region (NERO Lead)**

NERO (Recreational Fisheries Coordinator) will serve as a resource to the MRIP and the public about the requirements of the National Saltwater Angler Registry and other MRIP activities affecting Northeast recreational fisheries. Many changes to state licensing of saltwater anglers and Federal requirements for the angler registry took place in 2011, and improvements to how recreational anglers will be contacted to collect recreational fisheries information are currently being implemented. The Regional Recreational Fisheries Coordinator will provide information to Northeast anglers on the Saltwater Angler Registry and its relationship to recent state marine licensing requirements, and also will provide feedback to MRIP on its Northeast activities.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Provide information to the public on the National Saltwater Angler Registry and other MRIP program actions, with feedback to MRIP managers.

**Timing** ▶▶ This is an ongoing process. In FY 2011 the Regional Recreational Fisheries Coordinator routinely provided: (1) information to the public on the requirements of the National Saltwater Angler Registry related to new state marine fishing licensing/registry programs, (2) MRIP outreach materials at fishing shows, and (3) feedback to MRIP personnel on MRIP website and outreach materials. Similar activities are planned for FY 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Develop Habitat Information Pamphlet (NERO Lead)**

**Project** ▶▶ **Inform the recreational fisheries community on the importance of protecting marine habitat to maintain healthy fisheries.**

NERO will develop a Habitat Information Pamphlet, geared toward recreational fishing interests, that will describe the importance of protecting habitat to maintain healthy fisheries, provide information on programs to protect and conserve marine habitat, and provide information and advice to the recreational fishing community on how to interact with appropriate agencies on habitat conservation issues.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Habitat pamphlet or fact sheet.

**Timing** ▶▶ The pamphlet will be completed in late 2011, and will be distributed to the recreational fishing community in 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Inform the recreational fisheries community about the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP).**

**Project** ▶▶ **Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Outreach (NERO Lead)**

Work with the ACFHP Steering Committee to distribute the ACFHP Strategic Plan, which describes the goals and objectives of the partnership to protect and restore estuarine fish habitat along the entire East Coast. Also, work with the ACFHP Steering Committee to better involve recreational fishing organizations and include them as new ACFHP partners.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Distribution of ACFHP strategic plan to recreational fishing groups.

**Timing** ▶▶ Strategic plan will be distributed to recreational fishing organizations in early FY 2012. Discussions with recreational fishing organizations to join ACFHP will begin in FY 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Inform the recreational fishery community about marine aquaculture issues.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Educate and solicit input from recreational fishing groups on aquaculture (NERO Lead)**

Inform recreational fishing organizations on the upcoming NOAA and DOC aquaculture policy roll-outs, and solicit input on policy and regulation development.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Increased information to the recreational fishing community on the possibilities and challenges posed by aquaculture development for the recreational fishing industry.

**Timing** ▶▶ This is an ongoing process that will improve communication between the NOAA Aquaculture Program and the recreational fishing community.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Provide information to the recreational fisheries community on how to identify and release sturgeon.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Sturgeon identification and release brochure (NERO Lead)**

Shortnose sturgeon is a protected species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and Atlantic sturgeon has been proposed for ESA protection in the Gulf of Maine, Chesapeake Bay, and New York Bight. These species may be encountered during recreational fishing activities and, if caught, must be handled carefully and released quickly. A guide to identifying both of these species, and instructions on proper handling and release of hook-and-line caught sturgeon, will be developed and posted on the NERO recreational fishing website, and distributed to the recreational fishing community at boating and fishing shows and other outreach events. Proper identification and release of these protected species will reduce inadvertent fishing mortality and may allow recreational fisheries to continue in these areas.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Sturgeon identification and release brochure for recreational fishermen.

**Timing** ▶▶ Development of the guide will start in fall 2011, and the guide will be finalized for distribution at 2012 winter/spring fishing shows and outreach events.

## Goal 5: Institutional Orientation

**Objective** ▶▶ **NERO/NEFSC personnel to be aware of the importance of the Action Plan.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Annual In-house Recreational Fishing Action Plan Coordination (NERO and NEFSC)**

The NERO and NEFSC Recreational Fisheries Coordinators will conduct annual in-house planning and coordination meetings with their respective divisions and offices to review the Action Plan deliverables and activities, and explore ways to improve services to the recreational fishing community.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Improved internal awareness of recreational fisheries issues and priorities.

**Timing** ▶▶ The first briefings will take place early in each fiscal year.

**Objective** ▶▶ Elevate the awareness of recreation fishing issues among NERO personnel.

**Project** ▶▶ Institutionalize lectures on recreational fishing issues (NERO Lead)

The NERO Recreational Fisheries Coordinator will annually recruit a speaker and/or develop one presentation/lecture on a key recreational issues/program for one of the monthly in-house lectures to regional personnel. This lecture will also be offered to interested recreational fishing groups, clubs, or associations. NERO will also host one annual speaker on a recreational fishing issue as part of the Region's evening public lecture series.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Annual in-house lecture and annual invited public speaker on recreational fishing issues.

**Timing** ▶▶ An in-house lecture on the changes to the collection of recreational fishing data through MRIP and their implications for Northeast recreational fisheries will be completed in FY 2011. A speaker from the Commission gave a public evening presentation on striped bass history and management at NERO in July 2011. Similar events will be planned for FY 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Improve communication between the USFWS and the NERO/NEFSC regarding marine fisheries grant funding programs.

**Project** ▶▶ Northeast Region NOAA Fisheries and USFWS Northeast grants workshop (NERO Lead)

NERO will develop a NMFS/USFWS Grants Workshop Steering Committee that will organize a biennial NMFS/USFWS Northeast grants workshop to discuss and review USFWS and NMFS Northeast fisheries grant program priorities. Some workshop discussions will address recent USFWS policies using USFWS Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration funds for artificial reefs, and provide an update on the Action Plan.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Northeast grants coordination between USFWS and NMFS, with information exchange on recreational fisheries initiatives and policies.

**Timing** ▶▶ The Steering Committee planned and held a grants workshop in August 2011. Information on USFWS grants and NOAA grants will be made available to the recreational fisheries community through links on the NERO recreational fishing web page in 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Improve the understanding of the federal marine fishery management process by the recreational fishing community.

**Project** ▶▶ Presentation on Magnuson-Stevens Act fishery management with guidance for recreational fishing interests (NERO Lead)

The NERO Recreational Fisheries Coordinator will develop a presentation on the Northeast federal marine fishery management process. It will include advice on how those interested in recreational fishing issues can get involved with the Councils, Commission, and federal fishery management process.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Presentation on the Northeast federal marine fishery management process from the recreational fishing perspective.

**Timing** ▶▶ A presentation given at the annual American Fisheries Society meeting in September 2011 will be offered to recreational fishery clubs and associations, and to new Council and Commission recreational fisheries members and advisors in 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Ensure that the NERO/NEFSC strategic planning process takes into account the Action Plan's goals and action items.

**Project** ▶▶ Align the Regional Recreational Fisheries Action Plan with the NOAA Fisheries strategic planning process. (NERO and NEFSC)

NERO and NEFSC Recreational Fisheries Coordinators will annually review the Action Plan's five major goals and action items, and, where applicable, work with regional strategic planning personnel to incorporate the goals and action items into the NMFS strategic planning process.

**Timing** ▶▶ The first review of the Action Plan will take place in early FY 2012.

**Objective** ▶▶ Create opportunities for the recreational fishing community to participate in cooperative research program projects.

**Project** ▶▶ Encourage cooperative research & monitoring on recreational species (NEFSC Lead)

The NEFSC's cooperative research program will work with the Councils and the Commission to include recreational fishing research needs in appropriate cooperative research programs. For example, the Mid-Atlantic Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program often uses fishery allocations originally available to recreational and commercial fleets for high-priority research related to management. Since a number of RSA projects harvest recreational species, projects designed to address recreational fisheries issues should be considered.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Consideration of recreational fishing projects in cooperative research programs.

**Timing** ▶▶ This is an ongoing process.

**Objective** ▶▶ Inform other NOAA entities of the Action Plan and partner with them to provide information on NOAA services and products to the recreational fishing community.

**Project** ▶▶ Coordination of recreational fishing support activities with other NOAA entities (NERO Lead)

The NERO Recreational Fisheries Coordinator will inform representatives from NOAA's Northeast offices and programs on the Northeast Recreational Fisheries Action Plan and recent fisheries management and MRIP activities. Also, partnerships with other NOAA groups will be formed to distribute NOAA materials (e.g., information on weather, nautical charts, the Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary) at recreational fishing and boating events.

**Deliverable** ▶▶ Information on recreational fisheries to other NOAA Offices and information on NOAA services and products to the recreational fishing and boating community.

**Timing** ▶▶ The Recreational Fisheries Action Plan will be distributed to NOAA's North Atlantic Regional Collaboration Team in late 2011, and collaboration with and distribution of materials to the recreational fishing community will be ongoing.

## Summary

This Action plan identifies regional activities to address the five major goals of the National Action Agenda. The Northeast Region and Science Center will be reviewing the Action Plan items with, and encouraging feedback from, our recreational fisheries constituents so that we can revise and improve the Action Plan in future years.

The Recreational Fisheries Coordinators for the Region are:

*Paul Perra* – Northeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Gloucester, MA

*Earl Meredith* – Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Cooperative Research Program Gloucester, MA

The Regional Coordinators work closely with the NMFS National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fisheries to provide input and regional perspective on recreational fisheries issues of national interest.

The Coordinators attend key Regional leadership meetings, as appropriate, to help address recreational fisheries issues, and to seek input on a regular basis from the Region's recreational constituency, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (and its Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee and Working Group members), and other recreational fishing groups interested in the Region's programs. They interact closely with Regional Division and/or Branch Chiefs when recreational issues arise, and conduct and coordinate outreach activities to the recreational fisheries community with regional outreach and communications personnel.

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