

## WELCOME TO BILL'S CORNER!

**January, 2006** | ([archive](#))

Dear Constituents,

This month I'd like to address two important issues: the decision on our proposal to strengthen the guidelines for compliance with National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and our new stewardship and sustainability awards.

Back on June 22, NOAA Fisheries Service proposed to refine our 1998 guidelines that help the regional fishery management councils comply with the intent of Congress in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Act contains 10 national standards, and we proposed to change the guidelines for National Standard 1, which requires us to develop plans to end overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks.

After almost 10 years of working under the existing guidelines, our scientists proposed these refinements to emphasize ending overfishing more quickly than current practice. We also proposed some changes that would put overfished stocks on a rebuilding timeline based on a standard formula that accounts for the biology of each species. Right now, the guidelines call for stocks to be rebuilt in 10 years if it's possible to do so. However, based on experience since 1998, we know the requirement for stocks that can't rebuild in 10 years could benefit from additional clarification. Lack of such clarification has resulted in long-term rebuilding timeframes for some of our most overfished stocks. Our proposals were meant to clarify portions of the guidelines that have allowed continued overfishing and long-term rebuilding timeframes.

In response to our proposal, we received over 250,000 comments from the public. I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to write in. The public is obviously following these issues and is very concerned about the abundance of fish stocks, the extent that overfishing is still occurring in some fisheries, and the need to rebuild stocks so that optimum yield can be achieved for all fisheries.

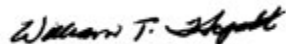
Your comments on the proposed revisions to the guidelines focused in large part on the issues of when overfishing should be ended and when overfished stocks should be rebuilt. We all agree that the sooner a rebuilding plan is implemented, the sooner a fish stock will be rebuilt. We also agree that ending overfishing in the first year of the plan will rebuild overfished stocks quicker. At the same time, we need to ensure that we're following the intent of the Magnuson-Stevens Act by taking into account the needs of fishing communities.

Based on the high volume of comments and concerns we received from the public, we've decided to issue a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed revisions to the guidelines. The notice of intent will include our original proposals and some additional proposals, in light of your comments and other developments, such as recent movement in Congress to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The public will have the opportunity to comment on this new development and submit new ideas for other possible changes to the guidelines. After we publish the notice of intent, we will complete a draft environmental impact statement and hold public hearings.

The other issue I'd like to discuss is NOAA's new stewardship and sustainability awards. On behalf of NOAA, we launched this awards program to recognize individuals and organizations who stand out in their efforts to promote best stewardship practices for the sustainable use of living marine resources. We're also recognizing people who foster a stewardship ethic within their community. Anyone who has exhibited leadership – industries, organizations, and individuals – is eligible to be nominated for the award. If you know of a person or organization that is deserving of recognition for their work in the areas of conservation, science, research, technology, habitat restoration, public education, and community service, please nominate them for this award. We're looking for nominations of industry, environmental or trade organizations, individuals and government agencies involved in the use, conservation, science and management of living marine resources.

All nominations are due by January 10, 2006, and we will announce the winners in February to coincide with the 135th anniversary of NOAA Fisheries Service. Also in 2006, along with the regional fishery management councils, we will be recognizing the 30th anniversary of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and the 10th anniversary of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. We have a lot to celebrate in the coming year!

I wish you all a wonderful new year, and a happy and safe 2006.



Bill Hogarth  
Director, National Marine Fisheries Service

## References

[Proposal to Strengthen Guidelines for Compliance with National Standard 1 Stewardship and Sustainability Awards](#)