

Science, Service, Stewardship



NOAA  
FISHERIES  
SERVICE

**NORTHWEST 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' northwest 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

## 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

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Regional Office 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).

The National Action Agenda includes five goals:

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 Northwest, salmon and steelhead fisheries dominate NMFS' management responsibilities that affect recreational fishing, in marine waters and freshwater. There are limited recreational fisheries on groundfish or highly migratory species in the Northwest.

Harvest of virtually all salmon and steelhead in the region is negotiated and adopted by the Northwest states and tribes to ensure compliance with conservation requirements and implementation of treaty Indian fishing rights under *U.S. v. Washington* and *U.S. v. Oregon* – including ocean fisheries considered by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. All of these discussions include determinations of the allowable harvests in recreational fisheries. NMFS participates in the discussions and must review and approve the effects of harvest on myriad listed salmon and steelhead populations under Endangered Species Act (ESA) sections 7, 10(a)1(a), or the Service's rule adopted in July 2000 under Section 4(d) (50 CFR 223, 42422).

Ultimately, sustainable salmon and steelhead fishing in the Northwest will rely on the recovery of ESA-listed populations and therefore benefit from the vast majority of resources and activities devoted to that goal. From development and oversight of the Biological Opinion for operation of the Federal Columbia River Hydropower System (FCRPS BiOp), to hundreds of formal and informal Section 7 consultations on federal actions affecting listed fish, to administration of the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF),

nearly all regional activities focus on conservation of salmon and steelhead resources of importance to recreational anglers and other fishermen..

NMFS' Northwest Region also administers the Mitchell Act program, which funds the production of approximately 70 million salmon and steelhead smolts in the Columbia River. This production hatchery program supplies a significant number of fish for harvest by the recreational, commercial, and tribal fisheries in the Columbia River Basin and along the coast to Alaska. This is the only national NMFS program that directly provides fish for harvest by recreational fishermen.

In the Northwest there is also a significant interaction between salmon fisheries and marine mammals. NMFS works to minimize these conflicts and has worked with state and local governments to provide assistance for hazing and removal activities.

The primary interface in the Region between the recreational angling public and NMFS is the Salmon Management Division, which is responsible for all harvest management and hatchery activities relating to salmon and steelhead under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Mitchell Act, and the Endangered Species Act. The initiatives described below are predominantly carried out by the Salmon Management Division, with some assistance from the Protected Resources and Sustainable Fisheries Divisions.

## Goals and Objectives

### GOAL 1: Improve Recreational Fishing Opportunities

The Northwest Region relies on abundant salmon populations. Working to improve harvest through funding for hatchery reform and coordination of co-managers will improve fishing opportunities while ensuring conservation requirements are met.

**Objective ►► Develop and evaluate an abundance-based harvest management approach for ESA-listed Columbia River natural Tule fall Chinook salmon.**

**Project ►► A proposal, if found technically feasible, for an abundance-based harvest management approach to Tule fall Chinook salmon for consideration by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and other co-managers.**

Support and participate in the multi-agency Tule Chinook Work Group investigating the merits of and methods for establishing an abundance-based management regime for Tule Chinook. The investigation conforms to a task included in the Lower Columbia River Salmon Recovery Plans for Washington and Oregon.

**Timing ►►** The Work Group anticipates delivery of a proposal to the Pacific Council in fall 2011. If approved by the Council, it is expected to be forwarded to NMFS for consideration in the next Lower Columbia River Tule biological opinion under ESA Section 7. If a usable approach emerges from the process, the Council may consider a fishery management plan amendment to adopt the approach as a formal conservation objective in the Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

**Objective ►► Establish and utilize the Snake Basin Harvest Forum to assist co-managers with reconciling fisheries to meet conservation and harvest objectives.**

**Project ►► Reconciled tribal and recreational harvest plans in the Snake River and its tributaries for consideration and ESA determinations under Section 4(d).**

The migration pattern of the salmon and steelhead populations in the Northwest results in multiple and sequential fisheries managed by multiple state and tribal governments under complex legal requirements for appropriate harvest sharing. Where sharing uncertainties exist, coordination and cooperation is required to ensure conservation requirements are met.

**Timing** ▶▶ Approved harvest plans prior to 2012 tribal and recreational salmon fisheries in the Snake Basin.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Implement hatchery reform at programs funded through the Mitchell Act.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Provide funding for more than 20 salmon and steelhead hatchery facilities in the Columbia River through the Mitchell Act.**

Production from these funded hatchery facilities will provide, among other things, up to one-half the harvestable salmon off the coast of Washington and will significantly contribute to harvest governed by the Pacific Salmon Treaty with Canada. NOAA has worked with the state and tribal operators of these facilities to design and prioritize hatchery reforms to reduce the adverse effects of hatchery production on ESA-listed and other depressed salmon and steelhead populations. Reform projects have also been funded through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund and direct Congressional appropriations (an additional \$10 million provided in FY 2010 Mitchell Act appropriations).

**Timing** ▶▶ Reform project priorities are updated continually in anticipation of available funding. Implementation occurs as funding is provided.

**Objective** ▶▶ **Reduce pinniped and human conflicts in the Rogue River, Oregon.**

**Project** ▶▶ **Continue implementation of cooperative program in Gold Beach, Oregon.**

Program seeks to reduce nuisance pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) from (1) taking recreational angler-hooked fish, and (2) damaging Port of Gold Beach property (e.g., docks, marina). This project, in its fifth year of implementation, has been extremely effective in reducing conflict between humans and pinnipeds in the Rogue River estuary and marina. Local, state, and federal government agencies, along with Gold Beach business and recreational fishing leaders, pooled their authorities, resources, and expertise to humanely discourage seal and sea lion use of the estuary during a 12-week period each summer/fall when the town of Gold Beach experiences a huge influx of recreational boaters and fishermen. Minimizing negative interactions between humans and pinnipeds serves NMFS' mission to recover, rebuild, and sustain living marine resources, and to sustain coastal communities and economies.

**Timing** ▶▶ Takes place over 12 weeks during summer and fall of 2012

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

By continually evaluating harvest programs, abundant salmon populations will be properly maintained or replenished. These populations are vital for Pacific ecosystems. A review of the effects of Chinook salmon abundance on killer whale abundance and recovery is underway.

### **Objective ►► Review the Lower Columbia River coho salmon harvest matrix.**

#### **Project ►► Host meetings among co-managers to discuss tasks and outline responsibilities for implementing the review.**

Lower Columbia River (LCR) coho were listed as threatened under the ESA in 2005. NMFS consulted under Section 7 on the effects of harvest to LCR coho in 1-year biological opinions in 2006 and 2007. In 2008, NMFS completed a multi-year opinion that is still in place. Oregon and Washington have proposed to manage ocean and in-river fisheries subject to a harvest matrix similar to the one used for Oregon Coast (OC) coho. Total exploitation rates vary depending on brood year escapement and estimates of marine survival. The LCR coho matrix differs from the OC matrix in that it has both an ocean and in-river component. When these components are combined, they allow for a higher overall impact for a given set of circumstances than are allowed for by the OC matrix. NMFS has limited the exploitation rate on LCR coho to the rate allowed by the ocean portion of the harvest matrix. In 2011, for example, the escapements and marine survival rates are such that the harvest matrix would allow for an overall exploitation rate of 21.4 percent; NMFS' biological opinion limited the exploitation rate to 15 percent. The states of Oregon and Washington and other parties have expressed interest in reconsidering harvest management for LCR coho and constraints imposed by the current opinion. Additional information obtained since completion of the current opinion in 2008, suggests that a second look may be warranted. As an initial step, NMFS has provided the states of Washington and Oregon a summary of analytical steps and other tasks that must be addressed by co-managers to accomplish the review. NMFS is hosting meetings among co-managers to discuss these tasks and outline responsibilities. Co-managers agreed to proceed with the effort, a decision that was recorded in subsequent correspondence from NMFS to Oregon and Washington.

**Timing ►►** Tasks identified and reviewed in the correspondence are to be completed by the co-managers by September 2012 so that NMFS is able to complete ESA review and Biological Opinion prior to the 2013 salmon fishery. As the initiative continues, reports will be forwarded to the Lower Columbia River Salmon Recovery Councils in Washington and Oregon, the parties to *U.S. v. Oregon*, and the Pacific Council for consideration.

### **Objective ►► Conduct scientific workshops on the relationship of Chinook harvest to Chinook abundance as prey for ESA-listed Southern Resident Killer Whales.**

#### **Project ►► Co-host a workshop**

NMFS and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) have agreed to co-sponsor a bilateral, three-session, scientific workshop process to review the science relating the effects of Chinook salmon fisheries to killer whales. The Independent Science Panel members have been selected, as has the Science Chair for the workshops.

**Timing ►►** The three sessions will be held September 13-15, 2011; March 13-15, 2012; and September 18-20, 2012. A draft and final report from the Independent Science Panel will be issued following the workshops.



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

Providing a variety of data on fisheries improves communication and informs others of the significant impact the loss of harvest would bring.

**Objective** ▶ Maintain and make available current estimations of economic effects of recreational salmon fishing activities.

**Project** ▶ The Northwest Region will maintain, update, and publish a variety of documents containing information about the economic value and effects of marine and freshwater recreational salmon fishing.

These documents include: The Columbia River Basin Hatchery EIS, the Puget Sound Hatchery EIS, NEPA documents associated with consideration, adoption and promulgation of rules governing annual salmon fishing regimes in the Pacific Ocean under the Magnuson/Stevens Act, NEPA documents associated with ESA determinations under sections 4(d) and 10 on Hatchery Genetic Management Plans and Resource Management Plans, various Congressional and administration requests and requirements related to the costs and benefits of salmon and steelhead production funded under the Mitchell Act.

**Timing** ▶ Periodic and ongoing.

### Goal 4: Improve Communication

**Objective** ▶ Conduct outreach to Northwest recreational fishing stakeholders

**Project** ▶ Identify and coordinate with key recreational fishing stakeholders in the Northwest to target outreach efforts.

Specific actions in support of this project include:

- Develop e-mail list of Northwest recreational fishing associations and clubs.
- Initiate discussions with other communicators within recreational fishing community and identify opportunities for improved collaboration and coordination.
- Ensure recreational fishermen are aware of opportunities to participate in development of Northwest policies that may affect them, including the Puget Sound Hatchery Environmental Impact Statement and the Columbia Basin Hatchery Environmental Impact Statement

**Timing** ▶ Ongoing throughout 2012.

**Objective** ▶ Highlight Northwest activities in support of recreational fisheries

**Project** ▶ Develop and distribute informational Materials on Northwest activities in support of recreational fisheries.

Specific actions in support of this project include:

- Develop a targeted recreational fishing web page to provide convenient access to information of interest.
- Develop a targeted fact sheet on Northwest activities in support of recreational activities.
- Participate in one recreational fishing/boating event.

**Timing** ▶ March - September 2012.

### Goal 5: Institutional Orientation

**Objective** ▶ Reflect hatchery reforms in approved Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (HGMP), complete with NEPA coverage, for the nearly-300 hatchery programs in the region, reconciling hatchery production, harvest management Resource Management Plans (RMP) and recovery planning under Section 4 of the ESA

**Project** ▶ Approve HGMP and RMP for all hatchery programs and harvest management plans, with associated NEPA compliance.

This deliverable requires the three states and more than 25 Indian tribes in the Northwest to collaborate and submit draft HGMPs and RMPs for NOAA consideration under provisions of the ESA.

**Timing** ▶ Early 2012.

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

**Project** ▶ Internal communications

The Northwest Region's Recreational Fisheries Coordinator will conduct annual in-house planning and coordinating meetings to review the regional Recreational Fisheries Action Plan deliverables and activities, and explore ways to improve services to the recreational fishing community.

**Timing** ▶ December 2011.



Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
Eric C. Schwaab

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

National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

U. S. Government – 2011

