



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

PACIFIC ISLANDS 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' Pacific Islands 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. Each plan is 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

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recognizes that marine recreational fisheries and associated economic and cultural activities are vital to Pacific Islanders. The key to regional engagement is the development and execution of recreational fisheries action plans.

Regional action plans are aligned with the overarching goals identified in the national Recreational Action Agenda. However, these plans are meant to be broad, flexible, and adaptable to accommodate each region's individual circumstances. It is important that regional action plans contain realistic, achievable actions with appropriate timelines for completion to build public confidence and trust in NMFS.

Regional Overview

The importance of recreational fishing to marine fisheries management has not gone unnoticed, and NMFS has begun a new initiative to raise the profile of recreational fishing in the Pacific Region. Recreational fishing is a way of life in the Pacific islands, and fishery conservation and management efforts have tremendous economic, social, and ecological impacts. Because these are oceanic islands, fishing and fish sharing are part of the culture. As U.S. fisheries are governed by annual catch limits and accountability measures to prevent overfishing and, as appropriate, move toward catch shares, island recreational fishermen need to work with NMFS and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council to stay engaged, informed, and proactive in the fishery management decision-making process.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: Improve Recreational Fishing Opportunities

Objective ▶▶ To reduce post-release mortality of recreationally caught fish to increase the number of fish available to be caught in the future.

Project ▶▶ **Barbless Circle Hook Project**

Staff in the NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) will provide barbless circle hooks (BCH) and educational materials at high-profile large and small fishing tournaments, fishing festivals, fishing clubs, and associations in Hawaii and encourage anglers to participate in BCH challenges. Barbless circle hooks are intended to minimize post-hooking trauma to marine resources (including fish, turtles, and Hawaiian monk seals) that are hooked and get away or are released. The use of barbless circle hooks increases the survival of fish that are released and decreases the potential of injury to fishermen during hook removal. Recreational fishing opportunities are improved along with the conservation of protected resources. PIFSC staff will participate in 10 to 20 recreational fishing events to introduce BCH concepts and benefits to the fisheries and protected resources.

Timing ▶▶ September 2012 (continuation of the project is contingent on availability of funds).

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

Objective ▶ Improve the collection of non-commercial fishery data.

Project ▶ Execute a memorandum of understanding with the State of Hawaii on the exchange of confidential fisheries information between the State (Department of Land Natural Resources) and NMFS (PIFSC and Pacific Islands Regional Office, PIRO).

Project ▶ Collaborate with and support the State in modifying its Vessel Registration System to serve as a vehicle for data collection.

Specific tasks will include NMFS (PIFSC and PIRO) consulting with the State to determine how to:

- Cost-effectively implement surveys targeted at vessels in the Registry that are used to fish recreationally.
- Revise paper registration forms and instructions to facilitate the collection of the information pertaining to fisheries.
- Modify vessel registration database to accommodate changes to vessel registration form.
- Modify the web-based vessel registration system.
- Provide outreach and education materials to fishermen on improved non-commercial fishery data collection.

Project ▶ Provide information about and encourage Hawaii's marine recreational fishermen to register with the National Saltwater Angler Registry (PIRO has lead).

Each of the above three projects will help PIRO facilitate a State exemption to the National Saltwater Angler Registry Program; produce a framework to facilitate future fisheries boat-based surveys of recreational anglers in Hawaii.

Timing ▶ July 2012

GOAL 3: Improve Social and Economic Data on Recreational Fisheries

Objective ▶ Increase understanding of the social importance of fish to Hawaiian communities that can also be used as a model for conducting similar research throughout the region.

Project ▶ Implement a project to understand the flow of non-commercial catch fish in Hawaiian communities (PIRO has lead).

Throughout the Pacific Islands, sharing fish has important cultural significance, because it is an expression of generosity, gives one status in the community, and enables social recognition. This pilot project will examine fish flow in two communities in Hawaii by ethnographic interviewing and the administration of a short community survey for people who distribute and receive recreationally caught fish. This "fish flow" may be analogous to having multiplier effects, not measurable in dollars but in terms of community competence and community solidarity. A central question is to assess the feasibility of beginning with a ceremonial event and working backward through network ties to the fisherman who initially contributed the catch. PIRO will deliver a tested methodology for tracking fish flow through multiple personal exchanges.

Timing ▶ June 2012.

Goal 4: Improve Communication

Objective ► Enable island recreational fishermen to participate in NMFS activities in fisheries, habitat conservation, and protected species programs and to help develop fisheries research initiatives.

Project ► Plan and develop a Pacific Islands regional recreational summit in 2012.

A major goal of the summit will be for fishermen—with representation from Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands—to meet face-to-face to review the progress of regional projects consistent with the National Action Agenda for Saltwater Recreational Fishing, and to develop new action plan activities for the next fiscal year. PIRO will hire a contractor to provide logistical and administrative support to coordinate the summit.

Timing ► September 2012

Goal 5: Institutional Orientation

Objective ► Strengthen and then maintain NMFS' ability to manage for the goals of Pacific Islands recreational fisheries, which differ from the traditional management goals of commercial fisheries that have historically guided agency actions.

Project ► Hire a Marine Recreational Fisheries Specialist

The Marine Recreational Fisheries Specialist will provide dedicated recreational capacity within the PIRO Sustainable Fisheries Division. The recreational fisheries specialist will have the following major duties:

- Conduct marine stewardship sessions in fishing communities in cooperation with the Council, PIFSC, and state/territorial agencies. These sessions will inform participants about fisheries regulations (federal and state) and conservation issues that most directly affect recreational fishermen.
- Visit fishing tournaments and other venues where fishermen congregate, and attend public events (e.g., the annual Hawaii Fishing Festival) and meetings, to distribute information to recreational fishermen.
- Work with a professional scientific/technical writer to improve the Sustainable Fisheries Division's fisheries web page to clearly present information on fisheries regulations, policies, and agency activities of regional concern.
- Expand and utilize the recently developed PIRO recreational fisheries list-serv for communication and information distribution.
- Work with the Sustainable Fisheries Division Social Scientist and PIRO communication staff to develop effective messaging to recreational fishermen.

Timing ► January 2012

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
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