

## **UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF ENGOS IN DEVELOPING FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS**

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Environmental organizations proliferated in the United States in the late 1960's, coinciding with the growing realization that Earth is a finite planet with limited resources. Missions and objectives among environmental organizations vary widely from inclusion of a broad spectrum of environmental issues to single-issue driven. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), established in 1969, solidified one way for stakeholder(s) to comment on all federal actions. Fish stocks are federally managed in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ, 3-200 nautical miles off national coastlines); therefore any management action under consideration within the EEZ must comply with NEPA regulations and follow public participation procedures. Eight regional management councils are tasked with developing fishery management plans in the US EEZ through a process which includes several steps where public review is accepted. These timeframes provide opportunities for environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) to participate in the development of fishery management plans (FMPs). Literature is lacking on the role of ENGOS and how they influence the FMP development process as they work toward conservation goals. This research aims to address this gap in the literature and findings further our understanding into how and why ENGOS participate in developing FMPs, as well as lend insight into what factors might direct their strategic choices as they work toward achieving their goals. More broadly, this research will contribute a richer understanding into how fisheries policy is influenced through the public participation process, specifically through the involvement of ENGOS.