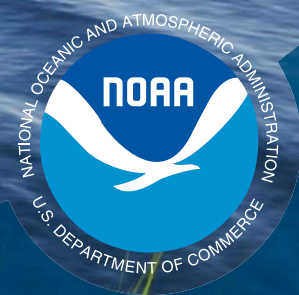




# Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2017



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

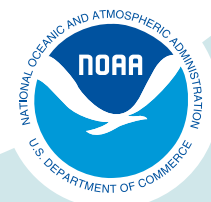
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# Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2017

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

# A Message from Eileen Sobeck

## Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

Dear Fisheries Colleagues:

Enthusiasm for the future, celebration of partnerships, appreciation for a job well done, sustainable U.S. seafood and the people who help make it happen are what makes NOAA Fisheries tick. This past year, we celebrated the success of 40 years of fisheries management under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. It was well worth highlighting the fact that U.S. fisheries are among the most sustainable in the world.

I also want us to recognize and celebrate all of the other fine work in 2016, including the launch of unprecedented initiatives such as the Ocean Noise Strategy Roadmap, the Climate Science Strategy, and the final Marine Mammal Protection Act Imports Rule. We also recommended \$11 million for 50 projects under the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grants Program, \$9 million in funding for community-based habitat restoration, and \$5.4 million in grants for endangered and threatened species recovery, and we finalized new action plans that outline recovery efforts for our eight “Species in the Spotlight.” These are just a few of the 2016 highlights.

So, with that impressive list in mind, I am pleased to present our Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2017. In this document we spell out Fisheries goals, priorities, and anticipated results for the next year. Our goals and priorities will drive the results and successes we expect to celebrate at the end of 2017.

You may notice that this year’s document is organized a little differently. What has not changed, however, is the purpose of the document, the commitment by leadership to stick to the priorities, and the clear focus on our strategic goals. The purpose of this annual document is to provide guidance to all Fisheries employees in executing our core mission responsibilities. As in the past, this year’s document also reflects high-level input and a commitment to execute this plan from every member of the agency’s Leadership Council—office directors, regional administrators, science center directors, and deputy assistant administrators.

While you may not see your specific role or office reflected in this document, you will see the agency’s high-level action items for the coming fiscal year organized and presented in the context of our three core mission areas—the drivers for all the work of agency staff, no matter where you are located:

- Ensure the sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities.
- Recover and conserve protected species.
- Improve organizational excellence.

So, as we step forward together into 2017, please accept my sincere appreciation for a job well done in 2016. I am confident that by working together and staying focused on our mission we can continue our successes into 2017.

Thank you.



## Focusing on our Strategic Goals

All NOAA Fisheries programs, projects, and investments are designed and conducted in a manner that supports these three strategic goals:

- Ensure the sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities.
- Recover and conserve protected species.
- Improve organizational excellence.

For each of these strategic goals, this document identifies NOAA Fisheries priorities, which are specific areas within these goals requiring a corporate focus in the coming fiscal year. The identified priorities consider NOAA Fisheries' mission functions in the context of a changing environment, current fiscal conditions, anticipated appropriated funding, recently identified risks, and specific, corporately identified, programmatic areas of focus. These priorities and associated anticipated results are intended to guide the development and execution of the FY 2017 Annual Operating Plan (AOP) and chart the individual efforts of each regional office, fisheries science center, and headquarters program office toward the accomplishment of collective strategic goals.

Meeting our goals provides economic, social, and environmental benefits to the nation. NOAA Fisheries supports these efforts with sound natural and social science and by implementing an increasingly ecosystem-based approach to management to promote healthy ecosystems and resilient communities. We will strengthen our partnerships and encourage innovation in all parts of the organization. Wherever appropriate, we will collaborate with our state partners, academia, and stakeholders.

### DOC Strategic Plan



### Strategic Goal 3

#### Environment:

Help communities and businesses prepare for and prosper in an changing environment.

#### Objective 3.4:

Foster healthy and sustainable marine resources, habitats, and ecosystems (NOAA).

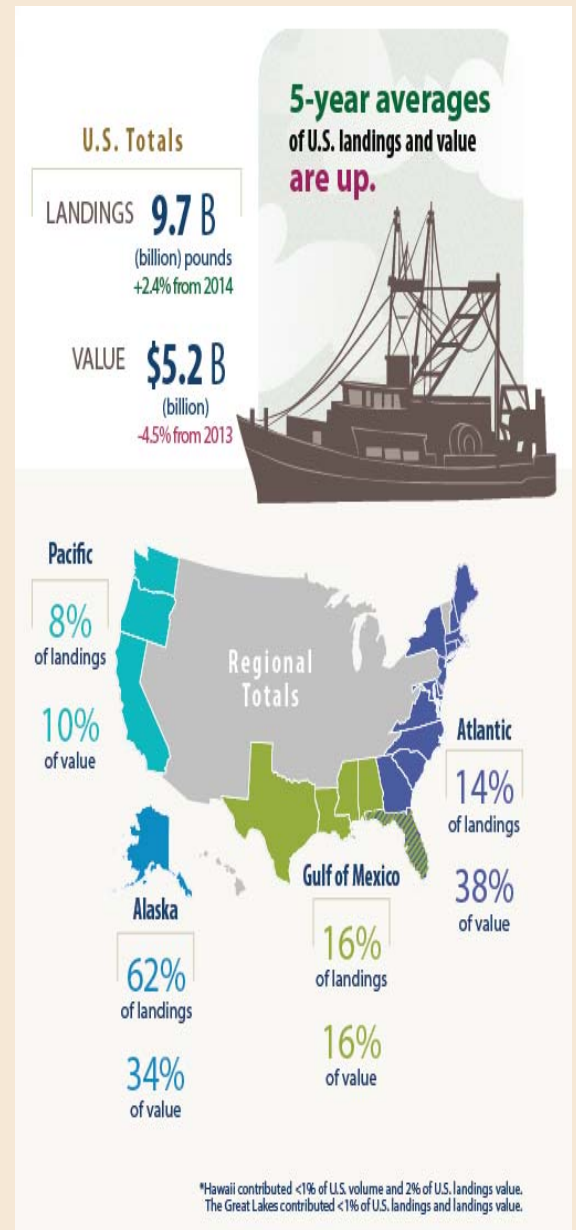
# Ensure the Sustainability of Fisheries and Fishing Communities

U.S. fisheries are among the largest and most sustainable in the world. The U.S. science-based fishery management process is designed to provide optimum yield while preventing overfishing and taking into account the protection of the marine ecosystem. This strengthens the value of fisheries to the economy and our communities; allowing for commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing opportunities plus aquaculture to provide a sustainable supply of healthy seafood for the nation and global markets.

NOAA Fisheries—in close coordination with the regional fishery management councils and state partners—is responsible for fostering healthy, productive, and sustainable marine fisheries and their habitats, as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and other related statutes. Effective management informed by world-class science is essential to ensure sustainable domestic seafood production; maintain and enhance fishing opportunities; protect ecosystem health and sustainability; and create jobs and other economic and social benefits in support of community resilience. NOAA Fisheries achieves these outcomes through effective, transparent management actions supported by strong science, habitat conservation and restoration programs, an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, partner and stakeholder coordination and communication, and an effective enforcement program.

With our partners, NOAA Fisheries has significantly reduced the number of stocks subject to overfishing and increased the number of rebuilt stocks through implementation of science-based annual catch limits and rebuilding programs, resulting in substantial value to the economy in terms of both revenues and jobs. We provide high-quality stock assessments and ecological and socioeconomic information

## 2015 US Commercial Fisheries and the Seafood Industry Highlights





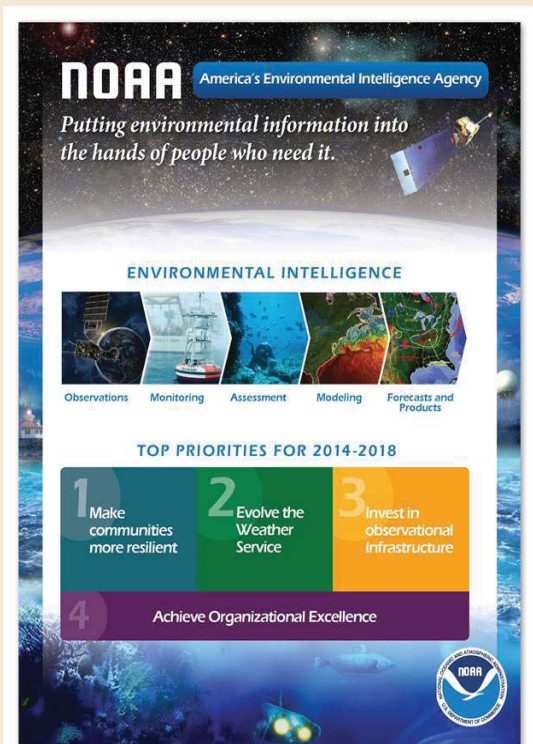
required for the federal management of fisheries and their essential habitats. We also work closely with our fishery management councils and state partners to develop and implement effective management programs, in addition to encouraging and supporting regular review of such programs to meet conservation and management objectives. We are implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management to ensure that fisheries are managed in an efficient, integrated manner, accounting for ecological considerations. We engage internationally to promote sound fishery management and conservation of global resources consistent with U.S. domestic fisheries policy. We also protect and restore coastal and marine habitats to sustain our valuable commercial and recreational fisheries and maintain resilient coastal ecosystems and communities.

In addition, NOAA Fisheries works to provide science, services, and policies to support the significant expansion and sustainability of U.S. marine aquaculture to address the gap between domestic seafood supply and demand. We are working toward greater regulatory efficiency, a holistic understanding of the interaction between aquaculture and the marine environment, and development of science-based tools for sustainable management. Aquaculture development provides job opportunities for coastal communities and the potential to increase the U.S. supply of sustainable seafood.

In the international arena, we work in partnership with industry and consumer groups to increase global consumer confidence in seafood by ensuring safe, wholesome, and properly labeled seafood through inspection, enforcement, and international cooperation.

Effective and innovative partnerships are critical to achieving the objectives of this strategic goal. NOAA Fisheries works to foster strong foundational partnerships with the regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, states, tribes, commercial and recreational fishing stakeholders, national and regional aquaculture associations, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders with responsibilities and interests in sustainable fisheries. These strong relationships lead to improved confidence, support, compliance, and stewardship of the fishery resources that NOAA Fisheries is charged to manage.

## NOAA Shared Priorities



Advancing the resilience of the nation's valuable marine resources and the many people, communities, and businesses that depend on them is an integral part of fulfilling NOAA Fisheries mandates, including fisheries management, protected species conservation and habitat protection.

## Ensure the Productivity and Sustainability of Fisheries and Fishing Communities

Priorities	Anticipated Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the MSA is implemented in an effective, fair, flexible, and streamlined manner with effective National Standard 1 guidelines and other policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize National Standard 1 guidelines and support regional implementation and coordination with the councils to effectively apply the National Standard 1 guidelines to end and prevent overfishing and rebuild fisheries.</li> <li>Implement the Fisheries Allocation Review Policy.</li> <li>Implement Catch Share 5–7 year review guidance.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement programs that improve the quality and timeliness of stock assessments and advance our approach toward more efficient stock assessment prioritization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the Stock Assessment Prioritization process to at least two other councils.</li> <li>Complete approximately 150 stock assessments and supporting surveys for federally managed, non-salmonid fish stocks.</li> <li>Complete an updated Stock Assessment Improvement Plan.</li> <li>Complete Marine Recreational Information Program Communications Strategy, National Academy of Sciences review, and external peer review of calibration tool, and prepare for Fishing Effort Survey transition in FY 2018.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance effective and practical electronic technologies to improve collection of fishery-dependent data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to execute regional electronic technology implementation plans.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance the National Policy for Saltwater Recreational Fisheries by executing the national and regional recreational fisheries implementation plans and directly engaging regional stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In each region, hold at least one regional roundtable discussion with regional recreational fishing stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize and implement the National Bycatch Strategy and advance the innovation and coordination of bycatch solutions across NOAA Fisheries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize the National Bycatch Strategy and develop regional implementation plans</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Policy and Roadmap to enhance integration of biological, physical, and social considerations in assessments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish the EBFM Roadmap and begin implementation through increased attention to ecosystem provisions in Fishery Management Plans and Fishery Ecosystem Plans.</li> <li>Complete a habitat risk assessment for select Pacific groundfish and develop Oregon Coast coho habitat restoration objectives, resulting in more targeted habitat conservation activities and better outcomes for managed fisheries.</li> </ul>



Priorities	Anticipated Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Regional Action Plans in support of the Climate Science Strategy, which will improve our ability to address the impacts of climate change on fisheries, their habitats, and the communities that depend upon them, and promote the NOAA stewardship mission in the Arctic through scientific research and international engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete climate vulnerability analyses in Alaska and the Pacific Coast and begin assessments in the Gulf of Mexico and Hawaiian Islands and for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species.</li> <li>Engage Arctic institutions and countries in promoting joint research and conservation of Arctic species relevant for assessing impacts of climate change and anthropogenic activities.</li> <li>Develop guidance for considering climate change impacts when conserving Essential Fish Habitat from non-fishing impacts.</li> <li>Work with other NOAA line offices to develop a NOAA coastal blue carbon strategy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster regulatory certainty and efficiency for aquaculture in federal waters and work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and coastal states to implement and respond to revisions to aquaculture permitting actions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of marine aquaculture permit applications being submitted and reviewed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud through sustained implementation of the President’s IUU Task Force Action Plan, and advance Fair Trade management, monitoring, and compliance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement International Trade Data System integration, Seafood Import Monitoring, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) import rule to reduce bycatch in international fisheries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote compliance with regulations through education and outreach, and provide effective enforcement of laws and regulations designed to support sustainable fisheries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and further define the use of the Compliance/Council Liaison position throughout the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and increase capacity to provide effective enforcement through implementation of OLE’s staffing plan.</li> <li>Implement the Presidential Proclamation by taking the necessary actions to prohibit commercial fishing and manage non-commercial fishing in the expanded marine national monument areas in Hawaii and the Gulf of Maine.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen habitat conservation approaches and policies to avoid, minimize, or fully mitigate impacts to coastal and marine habitats that support healthy fisheries and fishing communities via large-scale restoration projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a draft NOAA Mitigation Policy that can be applied across NOAA programs and authorities.</li> <li>Improve habitat conditions that will lead to long-term improvements in natural production of salmon.</li> </ul>

### Priorities

- Participate in renegotiation of key Pacific Northwest salmon harvest agreements—the *U.S. v Oregon* agreement for Columbia River fisheries and the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

### Anticipated Results

- Make progress toward durable salmon harvest agreements in the *U.S. v Oregon* agreement for Columbia River fisheries (due to expire at the end of CY 2017) and several Annex IV Chapters of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (due to expire at the end of CY 2018).



## SPECIES in the SPOTLIGHT

# Recover and Conserve Protected Species

NOAA Fisheries is responsible for the conservation and recovery of protected species and their habitats, as mandated by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Through these acts, Congress provided us with an enduring mandate to recover species that are facing extinction and to conserve marine mammals. The recovery and conservation of these species is critical to the sustainability and health of marine, estuarine, and riverine ecosystems and the resiliency of coastal communities that depend on them. Many of these species are key components of their ecosystems, while others have particular social and cultural importance. Our continued furtherance of all the benefits provided by these valuable, but vulnerable, living resources and their habitats depends on our collective efforts to understand their status and conserve them.

NOAA Fisheries carries out the mandates of the MMPA and ESA through specific requirements focused on reducing negative effects of human activities, including consultations conducted under Section 7 of the ESA, enforcing regulations against harming marine mammals and endangered species, and developing plans to guide the recovery and conservation of these protected species. We exercise our authorities through the MMPA to implement measures to reduce mortality and serious injury of marine mammals and protected living marine resources in international fisheries. We will execute EBFM to ensure that protected species are managed in an efficient, integrated manner, accounting for ecological considerations.

NOAA Fisheries conducts high-quality science to develop robust actions related to the recovery and conservation of protected species, including understanding and reducing human impacts on protected species through use of conventional and innovative bycatch reduction techniques, implementing guidelines for

Atlantic Salmon Gulf of  
Maine Distinct Population  
Segment



Cook Inlet Beluga Whale



Pacific Leatherback Sea  
Turtle



Southern Resident Killer  
Whale



Central California Coast  
Coho Evolutionarily  
Significant Unit



Hawaiian Monk Seal



Sacramento River Winter-  
run Chinook



White Abalone



reducing anthropogenic sound in the ocean, addressing impacts of land-based pollution and habitat loss, and focusing on science related to climate change.

NOAA Fisheries depends on captive propagation and outplanting when the status of protected species is critically endangered and other measures to maintain or improve a species status in the wild have failed. For example, several “Species in the Spotlight”—white abalone, Gulf of Maine Atlantic salmon, and Central California Coast coho salmon—currently depend on captive propagation and conservation hatcheries for recovery.

NOAA Fisheries also protects and restores habitat and the ecosystems on which protected species depend. The presence of healthy ecosystems and habitats that can support recovery of living marine resources under our stewardship depends on the success of our science and management. Habitat challenges in riverine, coastal, and ocean areas around the country are significant and pervasive, and habitat conservation and restoration requires improved scientific understanding of the relationship between habitat quality and quantity and the biological and ecological needs of species, particularly in the face of climate change. Meeting this challenge requires better-informed and more strategic, integrated management responses.

## Recover and Conserve Protected Species

Priorities	Anticipated Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the 5-year action plans for the eight NOAA Fisheries “Species in the Spotlight,” an agency initiative to highlight eight species most at risk of extinction in the near future and to focus efforts for their recovery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make progress in reducing threats and stabilizing populations of the eight NOAA Fisheries “Species in the Spotlight.”</li> <li>Convene the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Bycatch Working Group to evaluate the effectiveness of their sea turtle bycatch mitigation measures, as called for in the Pacific leatherback 5-year action plan.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement new business processes, guidance, and best practices to create efficiencies in our ESA Section 7(a)(2) consultation process and reduce the consultation backlog.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the results of a pilot project to reduce the development time for letters of concurrence under ESA Section 7(a)(2).</li> <li>Develop a policy to define the term “harass” under the ESA, and to clarify the different definitions used in the ESA and MMPA.</li> <li>Reduce the hatchery and genetic management plans (HGMPs) review backlog on the West Coast by completing ESA and National Environmental Policy Act review of 55 HGMPs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement recommendations from the FY 2016 ESA Recovery Program Review to improve the recovery planning and implementation process, and increase the likelihood of recovering species.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise the 1990 Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Priority Guidelines.</li> <li>Finalize the revised Habitat Conservation Planning Handbook.</li> </ul>

Priorities	Anticipated Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the impacts of human activities on protected species (including the production of underwater sound) by advancing scientific understanding and developing and implementing guidance and tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize and begin execution of 2-year implementation plans for the NOAA Ocean Noise Strategy, including fully implementing the Ocean Noise Reference network.</li> <li>Publish proposed national guidelines for safely deterring marine mammals from damaging fishing gear and catch, and damaging personal or public property, and preventing entanglement.</li> <li>Publish 2017 identifications for bycatch of protected living marine resources in 2017 Report to Congress and List of Fisheries requiring certification under the MMPA import rule.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on protected species and their habitats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize the analytical methods for the first ever Protected Species Climate Vulnerability Assessments for marine mammals and sea turtles, complete pilot projects for assessments of marine mammals in the Northeast and sea turtles in a selected region, and incorporate lessons learned from the pilot projects into the methodology for the Assessment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the quality of protected species stock assessments through development of new approaches to assessments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct national Protected Species Assessment workshop, focusing on sharing knowledge across fisheries science centers to improve assessment methods and trends, and methods to improve data quality for bycatch estimation.</li> <li>Complete stock assessments and supporting surveys for all strategic marine mammal stocks, and publish annual Stock Assessment Reports for the Atlantic/Gulf, Pacific, and Alaska regions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize enforcement of MMPA and ESA in Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs) with state and territorial partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate well-defined marine mammal and endangered species priority enforcement activities, where appropriate, within state and territorial Joint Enforcement Agreements with OLE.</li> </ul>

Priorities	Anticipated Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conserve habitat in NOAA’s Habitat Focus Areas (HFAs) for the benefit of protected resources, fisheries, and communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the Mill Creek Fish Passage Project to eliminate a barrier to upstream migration and restore access to critical spawning and rearing habitat for Central California Coast coho salmon (a “Species in the Spotlight”) within the Russian River watershed, as identified as a high-priority action in NOAA’s Recovery Plan.</li> <li>Guide priority actions for making progress toward conservation objectives by completing Implementation Plans for all 10 HFAs.</li> <li>Complete a draft of the first Deepwater Horizon open ocean restoration plan for public comment and develop the Gulf of Mexico strategic frameworks for restoration of sea turtles and marine mammals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conserve priority shallow areas for listed corals and address key stressors such as overfishing, land-based sources of pollution, and climate change through the use of applicable tools and authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand efforts to increase populations of ESA-listed corals by increasing outplanting capacity throughout the Caribbean region, increasing the number of corals in nurseries in the Caribbean Culebra HFA, and developing new restoration actions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance scientific understanding of West Coast water operations and the importance of habitat types to the recovery of salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon, and work with partners to improve natural flow, restore habitat, and increase water supply reliability for these species.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete life cycle models for water operations in California’s Central Valley and for habitat actions to advance recovery of listed Columbia River salmon.</li> <li>Align Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund projects with priorities in ESA recovery plans through increased awareness of recovery plan priorities by partners that carry out habitat restoration actions in Pacific Coast salmon habitats.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance scientific understanding of protected living marine resources in marine national monuments, including newly expanded monument boundaries within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and the new Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct the Hawaiian Islands Cetacean and Ecological Assessment Survey to assess marine mammal populations and an ecosystem within the Exclusive Economic Zone, including the newly expanded boundaries of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.</li> </ul>

# Improve Organizational Excellence

To realize the first two strategic goals—to ensure sustainable fisheries and recover and conserve protected species—NOAA Fisheries must be an effective and efficient organization with the agility to adapt and evolve to meet emerging challenges, even in an environment of reduced fiscal growth. Promoting organizational excellence is a continuous process to improve our ability to fulfill our mission, support our people, and transform the organization to be more responsive and resilient and to deliver better services, solutions, and outcomes that benefit the nation. The key factors that determine organizational excellence include our people, our business and management processes, and our technology and infrastructure.

NOAA Fisheries' reputation stems from the competency and dedication of our staff. Mission success depends on a fully engaged workforce with the knowledge, skills, and effective leadership necessary to achieve results. NOAA Fisheries will continue to focus on retaining and supporting a diverse, talented, and motivated workforce by fostering an atmosphere of empowerment and inclusion, with clear and effective communication, and opportunities for training and personal growth. This requires actively engaging in NOAA's effort to transition workforce management to mitigate critical operational risks associated with hiring delays, staffing shortfalls, and maintaining a skilled workforce that supports our mission.

Improving business and management processes, and implementing best practices and innovation, will improve our efficiency and effectiveness and ensure our internal operations best support our mission needs. These processes include strategic and budgetary planning and execution, program management, program review and assessment of results, communicating progress, working effectively with partners and constituents, and managing risk. Requirements change over time and the processes involved must change, evolve, and mature to best meet assigned requirements. This necessitates periodic review of existing processes to analyze crucial aspects, along with external stakeholder feedback, to ensure that we are best positioned to meet operational requirements.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Chief among the currently identified risks and challenges affecting our ability to achieve our mission are:

- Hiring delays and staffing shortfalls.
- Unsupportable operational demands (such as the increasing volume of ESA consultation requests and increasing demands for additional fish and invertebrate stock assessments).
- Inadequate ship time for at-sea data collection and aging NOAA fleet vessels, with decreasing dependability and remaining service life uncertainties.
- Aging facilities (many more than 50 years old) and outdated infrastructure.
- Insufficient science capacity to monitor climate-related changes and forecast impacts on abundance and distribution of living marine resources.

Technology and infrastructure are the foundation supporting our people, our work environment, and our business processes. NOAA Fisheries depends on secure information technology systems (scientific instruments, remote sensing and remote tracking devices, computers, software, and networked systems), modern facilities (offices and laboratories), and observing platforms (ships, aircraft, and remote sensors) that require continual management, maintenance, renewal, and refreshment to stay current and ensure a safe, efficient workplace.

Additionally, NOAA Fisheries is a science-driven agency whose credibility depends on the reliability and accessibility of our scientific findings. NOAA Fisheries must ensure that high-quality scientific information is delivered in a timely fashion to meet the needs of decision-makers and stakeholders and that it fulfills the President's policies on Open Data and Public Access to Research Results and NOAA's Big Data Initiative.

One of the most important aspects of organizational excellence is recognizing risks that may affect the people, business processes, and infrastructure of the organization, and taking steps to mitigate those risks in the management approach. In FY 2017, NOAA Fisheries faces many risks and challenges (see sidebar) that impact our approach to setting priorities and to carrying out our mission. We will implement a robust risk assessment process to collect and monitor a full range of risks across NOAA Fisheries and provide regular reports to leadership.

Many of the organizational excellence priorities for FY 2017 identified below are focused to directly address mitigation of these identified risks, and to put NOAA Fisheries in the best position to meet our strategic goals of sustaining fisheries and protecting species.





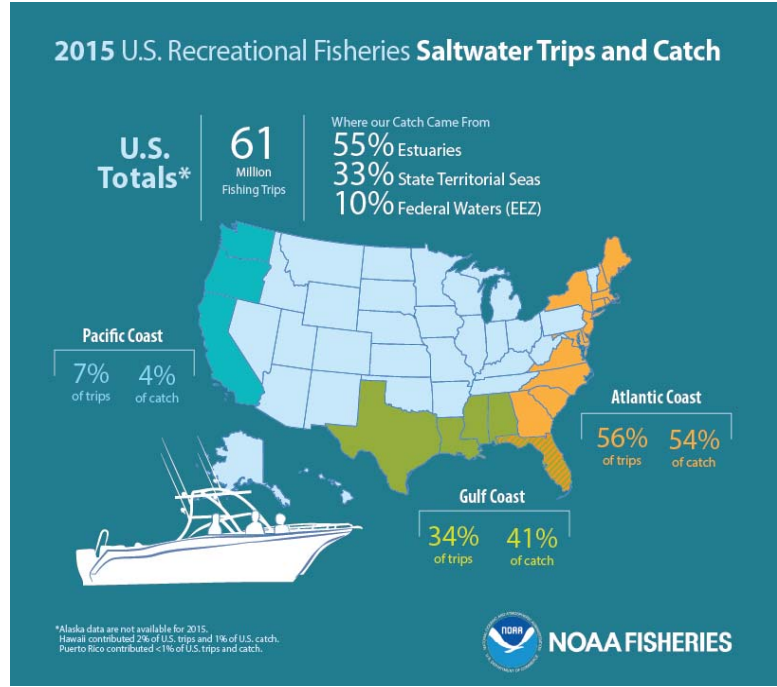
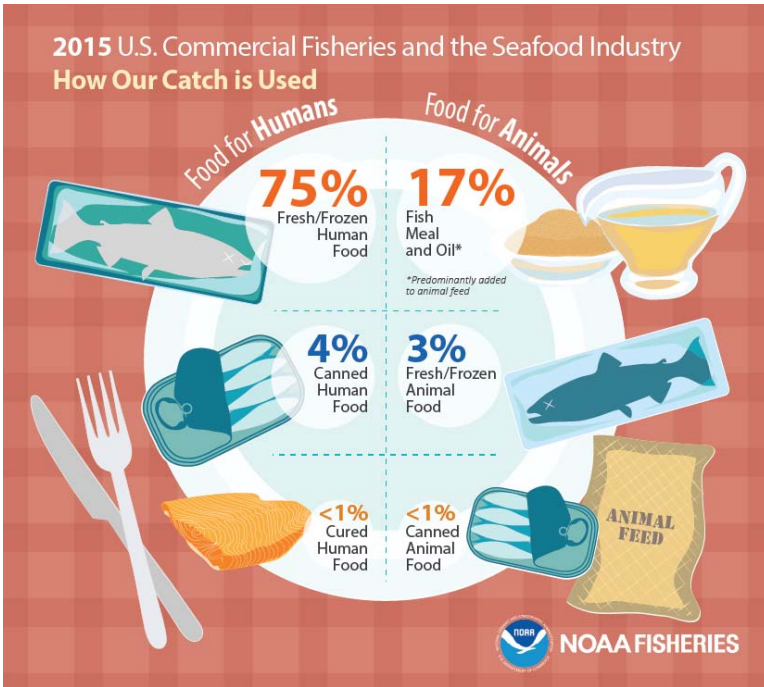
## Improve Organizational Excellence

Priorities	Anticipated Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop initial strategic workforce succession planning Key Position Profile process, tool, and data analytics to meet evolving mission needs and respond to anticipated changes in executive and senior management leadership composition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain strategic workforce succession planning at each NOAA Fisheries financial management center/office with Key Position Profiles for their executive leadership and deputy directors using the provided tool and data.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultivate an organization that is both diverse and inclusive and promotes a positive workplace experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey New Inclusion Quotient score for NOAA Fisheries.</li> <li>Conduct focus group activity by the Fisheries Diversity Tiger Team to collect diversity and inclusion feedback and develop measures to track progress toward meeting the goals of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve accountability and transparency by clarifying corporate decision-making rights and business processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement governance plans to clearly delineate functional roles and decision-making rights in key leadership positions across the agency.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Control and Management Control Reviews to assess financial, security, safety, and operational risks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a full Fisheries-wide inventory portfolio of risks, both administrative and programmatic, and implement a process to update and report to leadership quarterly.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve internal processes for allocating funds toward annual priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a “Priority-Based Resourcing” structure and process to meet leadership needs for information to make outcome-oriented allocation decisions.</li> <li>Develop a strategy by the NOAA Fisheries Science Board for identification of appropriate research and development funding levels required to support the agency.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve methods for measuring, reporting, and managing overhead costs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a profile of NOAA Fisheries indirect costs across all financial management centers to support an approach that ensures consistency across science centers, regional offices, and headquarters in defining, assessing, executing, and reporting of these costs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus recapitalization efforts on the most at-risk facilities supporting the NOAA Fisheries mission.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in NOAA-level Facilities Strategic Planning process and document creation to prioritize critical facility issues across NOAA.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize investments in vessel and aircraft assets, including NOAA platforms and partnerships with industry, to maximize data collection efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a plan for use of charter versus NOAA ship days-at-sea by region (e.g., for Atlantic and Gulf coasts), as contingency to early retirement of NOAA vessels.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that NOAA employees and contractors work in a safe and secure environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of at-sea Observer Program training and safety protocols and identify actions necessary to improve the safety of observers.</li> </ul>

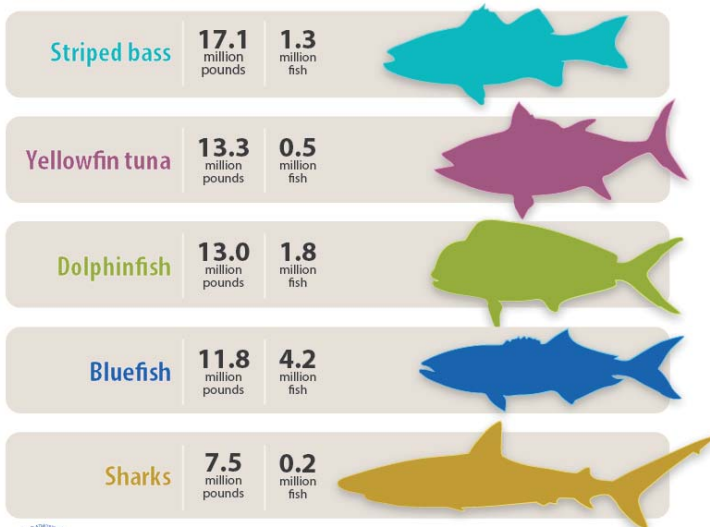
Priorities	Anticipated Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve communication of data, products, and activities to external audiences.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete phase 1 of the agency's Web Transformation project, including the launch of a pilot website.</li><li>• Implement an updated National Communications Strategy.</li><li>• Implement the Public Access to Research Results policy to share NOAA Fisheries' scientific data and publications.</li></ul>



# By the Numbers

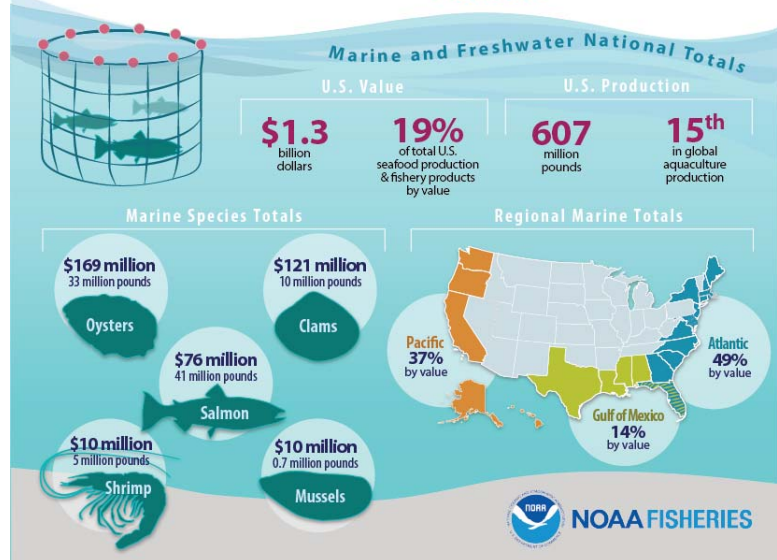


### 2015 U.S. Recreational Fisheries Top Species by Pounds Harvested\*



\*Alaska data are not available for 2015.

### 2014 Aquaculture Production Highlights





U.S. Secretary of Commerce  
**Penny Pritzker**

Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere  
NOAA Administrator  
**Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D.**

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