



# **NOAA Fisheries** West Coast Region **Strategic Plan** 2016 - 2020



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. West Coast Region Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
Role of NOAA Fisheries' West Coast Region	2
Organizational Structure	3
Partners and Stakeholder Engagement	7
<b>III. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies</b>	<b>8</b>
Overview	8
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies Explained	10
Sustainable Fisheries	10
Protected Resources	14
Organizational Excellence	18
<b>IV. Highlights – Goals in Action</b>	<b>20</b>
Groundfish Catch Share Program	20
Puget Sound	21
Columbia River Basin	23
Klamath River Basin	24
California Central Valley	25
Southern California Bight	26
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>28</b>
Appendix I: Alignment with DOC and NOAA	28
Appendix II: Partners and Stakeholders	30

## TABLES

Table 1: Primary DOC, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries goals and mandates supported by the WCR Strategic Plan	1
Table 2: Goals, objectives, and strategies defined	8
Table 3: WCR goals and objectives for 2016 through 2020	9
Table 4: Sustainable fisheries goal, objectives, and strategies (not listed in priority order)	12
Table 5: Protected resources goal, objectives, and strategies (not listed in priority order)	16
Table 6: Organizational excellence goal, objectives, and strategies (not listed in priority order)	18
Table 7. Partial list of co-managers, partners, and stakeholders	30
Table 8. Partial list of tribal co-managers and partners	31

## FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of the WCR and location of staff offices	2
Figure 2: WCR organizational chart	3
Figure 3: Map of WCR area offices' jurisdictions	6
Figure 4: Word cluster from the DOC, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries strategic planning documents	28

## ACRONYMS

DOC	Department of Commerce
EFH	essential fish habitat
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FMP	fishery management plan
FPA	Federal Power Act
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plans
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
IFQ	Individual Fishing Quota
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MSA	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Fisheries, or NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NWFSC	Northwest Fisheries Science Center
PCSRF	Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund
PFMC	Pacific Fishery Management Council
PSC	Pacific Salmon Commission
PSMFC	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
SWFSC	Southwest Fisheries Science Center
WCR	West Coast Region



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

# I. Introduction

This strategic plan for the West Coast Region (WCR) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) identifies our priorities for the next five years (2016 to 2020). This plan will guide internal decision-making and resource allocation. We expect demand for our services to remain high. In developing this plan we have assumed funding will remain level.

This plan includes goals, objectives, and strategies designed to support NOAA Fisheries' core mandates, as well as the primary goals and mandates of the Department of Commerce (DOC) and NOAA, which are highlighted in Table 1 and further described in Appendix 1.

**Table 1: Primary DOC, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries goals and mandates supported by the WCR Strategic Plan.**

<b>DOC ENVIRONMENTAL GOAL</b>
Ensure communities and businesses have the necessary information, products, and services to prepare for and prosper in a changing environment.
<b>NOAA VISION AND HEALTHY OCEANS GOAL</b>
<i>Vision:</i> Healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies that are resilient in the face of change.
<i>Goal:</i> Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity sustained within healthy and productive ecosystems.
<b>NOAA FISHERIES' CORE MANDATES</b>
Ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations.
Recover and conserve protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences.



Spring Chinook. Photo: Lance Kruzic, WCR

In supporting these goals and mandates, and in carrying out our plan, we will use the best available science and strive for organizational excellence through service, responsiveness, fiscal integrity, strong partnerships, innovative solutions, and internal alignment.

Annually, we will refer to this plan to reflect on our progress and identify specific actions we will take to accomplish our goals and objectives.

This plan is organized to familiarize the reader with the role of the WCR in carrying out NOAA Fisheries' mandates, as well as how we are organized to carry out these duties, before introducing our specific goals, objectives, and strategies. We also describe many of our key partners and stakeholders early in this plan because the majority of our work involves collaborations internally and externally. By introducing this information early in the plan, the reader may better understand which divisions and offices within the WCR will be involved in working towards our various goals, objectives, and strategies.

# II. West Coast Region Overview

## Role of NOAA Fisheries' West Coast Region

The WCR is responsible for the stewardship of our nation's living marine resources and their habitats off the coasts and in the watersheds of Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho. These responsibilities cover 317,690 square miles of the eastern Pacific Ocean's California Current Ecosystem, and over 7,000 miles of tidal coastline, as well as the ecological functions within the states' vast rivers and estuaries. Along the West Coast, we manage commercial and recreational fisheries for over 100 species of salmon, groundfish, coastal pelagics such as anchovy and sardine, and highly migratory species such as billfish, sharks, and tunas, in harmony with our responsibility to recover and conserve threatened and endangered anadromous and marine species and manage and conserve marine mammals. We also work to enable domestic aquaculture production within the context of these stewardship responsibilities.

The WCR also represents NOAA Fisheries in international venues and domestically with other Federal, tribal, state, and non-governmental conservation agencies; fishing and aquaculture industries and interests; seafood consumers; other constituents; and the general public.



Figure 1: Map of the WCR and location of staff offices

## Organizational Structure

The WCR employs over 300 people located in several offices throughout California, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. The WCR has a distributed leadership structure with members of the senior leadership team located across the WCR to serve constituents. Three programs operate coast-wide, while four area offices operate in specific geographic areas.

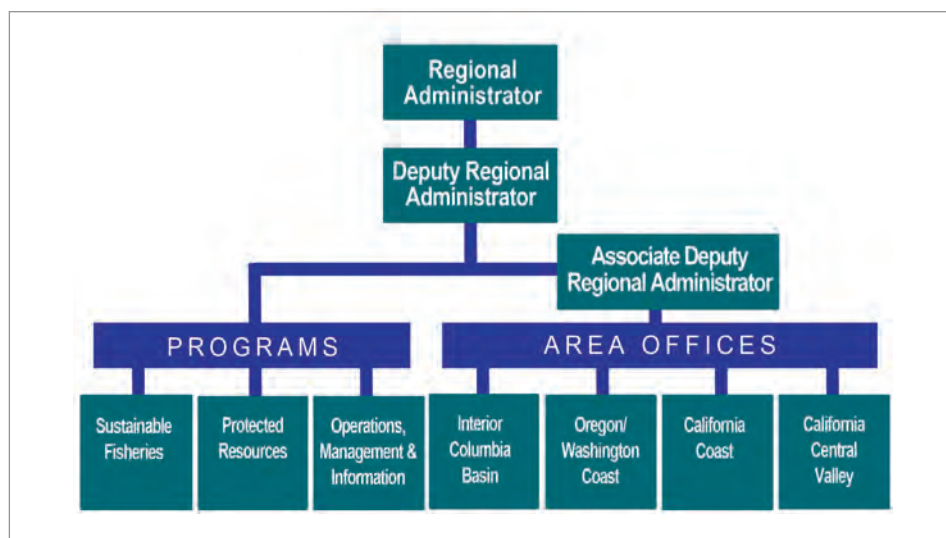
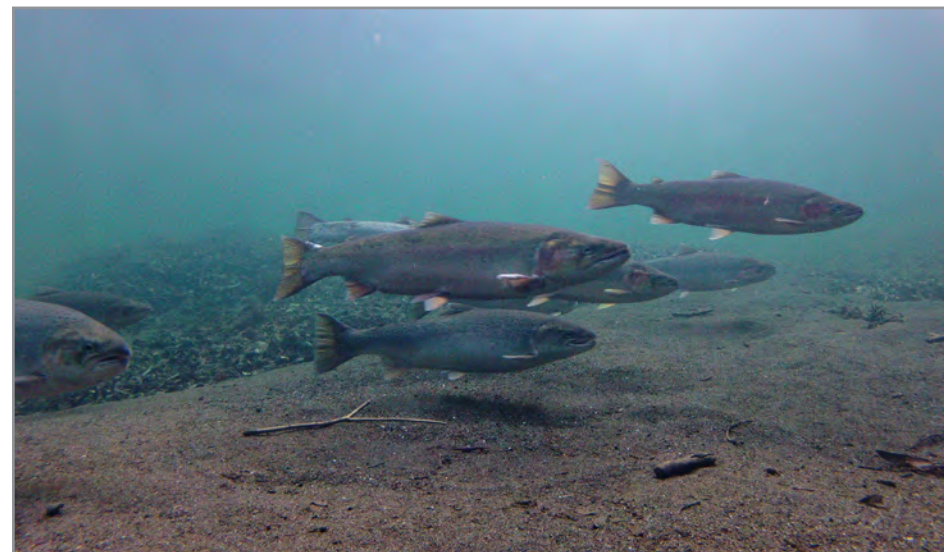


Figure 2: WCR organizational chart

## Regional Administrator's Office

The Regional Administrator's Office, including the Deputy and Associate Deputy Regional Administrators, oversees WCR activities. Working with leadership in the programs and area offices, the Regional Administrator's Office establishes WCR policies, procedures, principles, and priorities. The Office also oversees and coordinates several cross-division activities, such as communications, aquaculture, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, which requires coordination by staff in multiple offices and locations throughout the WCR.



Central California Coast Steelhead, Russian River (RRHFA). Photo: Justin Smith, Sonoma County Water Agency

The Partnerships, Communications & External Affairs team conveys WCR activities in clear and compelling ways that engage stakeholders, promote understanding of trust resources, convey the science behind our decisions, and advance NOAA Fisheries' mission. The team creates opportunities to share knowledge, build understanding, and recognize achievements from our stewardship of marine resources and ecosystems on the West Coast. Its expertise includes online information and design, intergovernmental relations, education, tribal relations, media relations, and social media.

## Operations, Management & Information Division

The Operations, Management and Information Division supports WCR operations through budget planning, formulation, and execution; human resources management (including Equal Employment Opportunity and diversity); oversight of administrative processes; management of information, information technology, and communications systems; and management of environmental compliance, travel, facilities, safety, and property.



Top: Columbia River tribal platform fishing scaffold. Photo: Jamie Goen, WCR

Bottom: Commercial albacore fishing. Photo: Craig D'Angelo, WCR

## Sustainable Fisheries Division

The Sustainable Fisheries Division is responsible for programs related to the conservation of fishery resources, eliminating overfishing, rebuilding overfished populations, maintaining healthy commercial and recreational fisheries, creating long-term economic and social benefits to the nation from living marine resources, and ensuring that harvest and hatchery decisions are consistent with the Federal government's Indian trust responsibilities and treaty obligations. Specifically, the Division is responsible for:

- implementing the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) on the continental West Coast for highly migratory species, coastal pelagic species, groundfish, and salmon fisheries;
- maintaining the United States' international obligations under the following treaties and agreements, and as parties to the following commissions for salmon, tuna, halibut, and whiting:
  - Pacific Salmon Treaty, including providing administrative, policy support, and representation to the U.S. Section of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC);
  - Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), including support to the U.S. representative to the IATTC and implementation of the Tunas Conventions Act, Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), and the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty;
  - Halibut Convention and Northern Pacific Halibut Act, including supporting the U.S. representative on the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC); and
  - Pacific Whiting Agreement, including implementing the Pacific Whiting Act and supporting the U.S. representatives on the Joint Management Committee;
- ensuring that fishing regimes and artificial production programs are consistent with the conservation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed salmon and steelhead populations;
- upholding Indian trust responsibilities and treaty Indian fishing rights under *United States v. Washington*, *United States v. Oregon*, *Hoh v. Baldrige*, *Paravanno v. Babbitt and Brown*, and other judicial decisions;
- administering Mitchell Act grants and agreements for hatchery production and fish passage projects in the Columbia River Basin to mitigate the loss of natural salmon and steelhead production from the construction and operation of Federal hydropower and water-development projects; and
- administering the Tuna Tracking and Verification Program, a national program authorized by the Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act, to monitor dolphin-safe labeling for tuna products sold in the United States.

## Protected Resources Division

The Protected Resources Division is responsible for the oversight, policy direction, guidance and coordination of management programs mandated by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the ESA. Specifically, the Division:

- serves as the regional lead to implement the ESA for the conservation of ESA-listed marine species (e.g., species of marine mammals, sea turtles, abalone, etc.), including developing regulations and management measures, conducting consultations, and developing recovery plans;
- carries out status reviews to determine if species warrant protection under the ESA or if ESA-listed species no longer need such protections;
- issues and monitors the implementation of research and incidental take permits;
- manages marine mammal and sea turtle stranding networks throughout the WCR;
- administers the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund in support of salmon and steelhead recovery plans and identified priority actions; and
- coordinates with NOAA Fisheries' headquarters Office of Protected Resources on MMPA and ESA policy and nationwide programs.



Above: Grey whale adult with calf. Photo: SWFSC



Center: Black abalone. Photo: Susan Wang, WCR



Right: Sockeye salmon. Photo: NOAA

## Area Offices

Four area offices – California Coastal, California Central Valley, Interior Columbia Basin, and Oregon and Washington Coastal – carry out integrated watershed-based approaches to advance the WCR’s mission by focusing primarily on the conservation of anadromous fish, their habitats, and the ecosystems on which they depend. They are also responsible for marine habitat conservation along the WCR’s coastline. Specifically, these offices:

- implement ESA Sections 4, 7, and 10; MSA essential fish habitat (EFH) provisions, the Federal Power Act (FPA), and Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) in their geographic areas;
- consult with Federal, tribal, and state agencies that authorize, fund, or undertake actions that may adversely affect ESA-listed species or EFH;
- consult on projects to improve fish passage, and provide technical assistance to states, tribes, and others seeking to improve habitat conditions for managed and ESA-listed species;
- develop and implement salmon, steelhead, and green sturgeon recovery plans, with a particular focus on habitat; and
- develop science-based strategies and effective partnerships to recover and conserve WCR trust resources.



Figure 3: WCR area offices’ jurisdictions



Bottom left: Stream survey, Bear Valley. Photo: Matthew Nesbit, WCR

Middle: Fish ladder on the Columbia River. Photo: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Right, top: Tagged adult steelhead. Photo: John McMillan, NWFS

Bottom: Fish relocation prior to the destruction of the Condit Dam in Washington. Photo: Merlin Alix Smith, WCR



## Partners & Stakeholder Engagement

We will succeed in our mission only if we work with partners and engage stakeholders. Some of our most important partners are within NOAA. We rely on NOAA Fisheries' Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers (Science Centers) to provide top quality scientific information on marine resources and their ecosystems. We also rely on NOAA General Counsel to provide legal guidance and the Office of Law Enforcement to ensure compliance with West Coast regulations. We coordinate with the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center in our international fisheries work in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the NOAA Fisheries Alaska Regional Office on fisheries regulations that affect shared stakeholders, and with the NOAA Fisheries Alaska Fisheries Science Center on marine mammal research and management. We coordinate with all NOAA Fisheries and NOAA offices on the West Coast, such as the NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center, and NOAA's five West Coast National Marine Sanctuaries, Coastal Services Center, Office of Response and Restoration, NOAA Seafood Inspection Program, and National Weather Service, to coordinate activities, maximize resources, and provide expertise in addressing complex ecosystem issues affecting NOAA Fisheries' trust resources on the West Coast. The WCR also engages with NOAA Fisheries' headquarters offices, such as Protected Resources, Sustainable Fisheries, Habitat Conservation, Aquaculture, International Affairs, and Science and Technology, to contribute to nationwide programs, policies, and guidance related to ESA, MMPA, and MSA implementation.

External partners are equally fundamental to the success of our mission. Of utmost importance are the partnerships we have with our co-managers – the states of California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, and West Coast tribes – and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) is a vital partner through its fisheries monitoring, data collection, and data management services. Internationally, the WCR works with the U.S. Department of State and through several regional fishery management organizations, including the IATTC, PSC, and Pacific Halibut Commission, as well as with Canada and Mexico, to ensure that stocks of shared importance remain sustainable. Through these venues and directly, the WCR engages with commercial and recreational fisheries constituents, the aquaculture industry and shellfish restoration community, fishing communities, environmental groups, and the general public on all fisheries matters.



Habitat restoration project. Photo: Jim Muck, WCR

Conservation and recovery of our at-risk resources relies on diverse partnerships with Federal agencies, states, tribes, local agencies, industry, landowners, and various non-governmental organizations. Salmon and steelhead recovery is implemented in local communities, at the watershed level, and is coordinated with states and tribes throughout the West Coast. The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) is the WCR's principal resource for empowering local partners to lead implementation of priority recovery actions for West Coast salmon and steelhead. In addition to funding priority on-the-ground habitat protection and restoration activities, PCSRF also supports essential planning, coordination, engineering and design, and population status and effectiveness monitoring. Recovery of marine species including marine mammals, sea turtles, rockfish, eulachon, sturgeon, and abalone along the West Coast is informed by scientific research and developing and implementing effective management actions with government entities and stakeholder groups. These species are affected by human activities along the West Coast and some have threats outside of U.S. waters requiring international coordination.

Communication and education are essential to fostering stewardship of West Coast living marine resources. We work with many internal and external partners, including Sea Grant programs, aquariums, and museums, to help us communicate with a variety of audiences. A list of key partners is included in Appendix II.

# III. Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

## Overview

Three goals will guide our work over the next five years (see Table 3). Two goals reflect NOAA Fisheries' core mission to maintain sustainable fisheries and recover protected species. Our third goal describes how we will succeed in carrying out our mission as an organization. While NOAA Fisheries' core missions seem to align with specific divisions, in fact, each of the Divisions and the Area Offices, as well as the Regional Administrator's Office, each play a significant role in contributing to all three goals.

Under each goal, we identified several objectives to describe more specifically what we will strive to achieve. Under each objective, we further identified a series of strategies that we will use to achieve each objective. Many of the strategies will be implemented collaboratively among Area Offices and Divisions and coordinated across the WCR.

An overview of our three goals and their corresponding objectives can be found on the next page (see Table 3). In the section following, we describe each goal in greater detail and list the strategies corresponding to each objective.

In the WCR, we strongly value our service to the public, focus on solutions, cultivation of partnerships, and science-based decision making. These values are reflected in our objectives and strategies.

Table 2: Goals, objectives, and strategies defined

<b>GOALS</b>
A statement of aim or purpose articulating what we need to achieve to advance our mission.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>
More detailed statements of the outcomes or management impact we are trying to achieve with each goal. These objectives will help us prioritize, manage, and evaluate our activities.
<b>STRATEGIES</b>
Approaches we will take to accomplish the objectives. Each year we will identify specific actions to carry these out.

Table 3: WCR goals and objectives for 2016 to 2020.

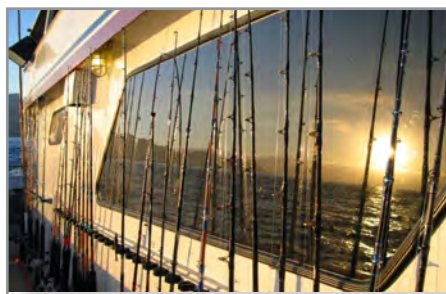
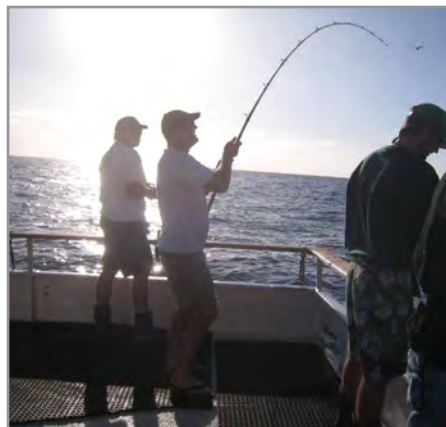


GOALS	GOALS	GOALS
<p>Ensure sustainable and productive West Coast fisheries and resilient fishing communities through science-based and collaborative management.</p>	<p>Recover and conserve protected West Coast marine and anadromous species through partnerships and innovative science-based solutions.</p>	<p>Achieve the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and service in all regional operations.</p>
OBJECTIVES	OBJECTIVES	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engagement:</b> Ensure strong engagement with constituents and coordination with partners and co-managers to develop and implement effective fishery management processes and measures.</li> <li>• <b>Social and Economic Contributions:</b> Maximize fisheries and aquaculture benefits to West Coast communities, seafood consumers, recreational fishing anglers, and tribes in harmony with our other goals.</li> <li>• <b>Stewardship:</b> Minimize impacts of seafood harvest and production on the marine ecosystem.</li> <li>• <b>Consultations and Support:</b> Help minimize impacts from non-fishing activities to protect essential fish habitat and maintain healthy and resilient ecosystems that support productive fisheries.</li> <li>• <b>Science and Technology:</b> Use the best available science, technology, and tools to inform management decisions, monitor fisheries, and help improve aquaculture practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recovery:</b> Advance recovery of ESA-listed species and conservation of all species under our authority and the habitats on which they depend.</li> <li>• <b>ESA Consultations and Support:</b> Provide timely and effective ESA assistance and consultations to partners and stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>Marine Mammal Conservation:</b> Promote marine mammal monitoring and conservation, and minimize impacts through education, outreach, partnerships, and implementation of the MMPA.</li> <li>• <b>Science:</b> Collaborate with Science Centers, stakeholders, and other partners to develop and use the best available science for the conservation and recovery of protected species.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communications and Customer Service:</b> Be pro-active in our communications and provide responsive and efficient service to internal and external partners and stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>Fiscal Integrity:</b> Implement processes and tools for accountability and the responsible management of public funds.</li> <li>• <b>Internal Alignment:</b> Create an integrated, organized, and coordinated regional office to support staff, maximize resources, and improve Agency outcomes.</li> <li>• <b>Staff:</b> Invest in staff growth and development to create a resilient organization.</li> </ul>



Over the next five years, we will remain focused on ensuring that West Coast fisheries are managed sustainably – minimizing adverse harvest impacts on the ecosystem; maintaining healthy stocks; protecting and restoring essential fish habitat; facilitating management approaches to sustain and/or improve access and benefits to fishing communities, anglers, and seafood consumers in harmony with our other goals; and supporting core fisheries sampling programs conducted by the states and the Science Centers, as well as advancements in data collection and monitoring. We will also look for opportunities to contribute to fishing communities' resilience and industry innovation in the face of changing environmental and market conditions.

Table 4 identifies a list of strategies (not listed in priority order) we will pursue, many of which will be in conjunction with the PFMC, to achieve our Sustainable Fisheries goal and objectives for engagement, social and economic contributions, stewardship, consultations and support, and science and technology.



Left: Halibut camouflaged in eelgrass bed. Photo: Adam Obaza, WCR  
 Above, top, center and below: Recreational fishing charter, California. Photo: Craig Heberer, WCR  
 Top, right: Swordfish captured during Pflieger Institute of Environmental Research (PIER) cruise testing deep-set buoy gear off southern California. Photo: Ralph Pace  
 Above: Fishermen's Terminal, Seattle. Photo: Jamie Goen, WCR



## GOAL: Ensure sustainable and productive West Coast fisheries and resilient fishing communities through science-based and collaborative management.

### Engagement

<p><b>OBJECTIVE</b></p> <p>Ensure strong engagement with constituents and coordination with partners and co-managers to develop and implement effective fishery management processes and measures.</p>	<p><b>STRATEGIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assist co-managers and partners in developing recommendations and proposals aligned with the MSA, ESA, and other applicable law through policy guidance and technical assistance.</li> <li>2. Engage stakeholders in developing international fishery management policy and implementing obligations of the U.S. under international agreements.</li> <li>3. Create administrative efficiencies in the regulatory system, both internally and externally.</li> <li>4. Write fishery regulations so they are in plain language and less complex, to the extent possible.</li> <li>5. Support tribal fisheries and the renewal of salmon harvest agreements,</li> </ol>	<p>consistent with the provisions of the <i>U.S. v. Washington, U.S. v. Oregon</i>, and the Pacific Salmon Treaty.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Increase engagement with anglers in carrying out NOAA Fisheries' Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Engagement Initiative on the West Coast to enhance recreational fishing opportunity, improve recreational fisheries data, and strengthen communications between the Agency and anglers.</li> <li>7. Encourage industry involvement in research through cooperative research projects, exempted fishing permits, and promotion of grant opportunities, such as the Saltonstall-Kennedy and Bycatch Reduction Engineering Programs.</li> </ol>
--	--	---

### Social & Economic Contributions

<p><b>OBJECTIVE</b></p> <p>Maximize fisheries and aquaculture benefits to West Coast communities, seafood consumers, recreational fishing anglers, and tribes in harmony with our other goals.</p>	<p><b>STRATEGIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administer the Mitchell Act grant program to support hatchery production and fish passage projects.</li> <li>2. Encourage management approaches that provide for new entrants, foster fishing community participation and diversity in West Coast fisheries, stimulate innovation, and increase flexibility and efficiency.</li> <li>3. Collaborate with industry, states, fishing communities, and the PFMC to support industry advances consistent with the sustainability of West Coast fisheries resources.</li> <li>4. Support initiatives and partnerships for enhancing fishing community</li> </ol>	<p>resilience, including support for sustainable working waterfronts and fisheries supportive industries.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Coordinate with partners, improve permit processes, and promote scientific research and analysis to enable sustainable marine aquaculture on the West Coast that will create jobs and increase domestic production of safe and healthy seafood.</li> <li>6. Enhance communications to seafood consumers and the general public about the responsible and sustainable management of West Coast fisheries.</li> </ol>
--	--	---

## Stewardship

### OBJECTIVE

Minimize impacts of seafood harvest and production on the marine ecosystem.

### STRATEGIES

1. Prevent overfishing through effective annual catch limits and other harvest strategies.
2. Maintain consistent rebuilding progress for currently overfished stocks, work to prevent new stocks from becoming overfished, and ensure timely development and implementation of rebuilding plans for any stocks that become overfished.
3. Minimize bycatch in West Coast fisheries through selective gear and methods that maintain fishing opportunity.
4. Work with international partners and the U.S. fishing industry to improve

- sustainability of shared stocks, address illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, promote dolphin-safe tuna fishing practices, and reduce international fleet capacity in the eastern Pacific Ocean.
5. Minimize impacts of fisheries on ESA-listed species, marine mammals, sea turtles, and sea birds, engaging in consultations as needed.
  6. Protect EFH and deep sea corals through FMP amendments, and other regulatory actions.
  7. Work with partners to support best practices for sustainable aquaculture production.

## Consultations & Support

### OBJECTIVE

Help minimize impacts from non-fishing activities to protect essential fish habitat and maintain healthy and resilient ecosystems that support productive fisheries.

### STRATEGIES

1. Provide conservation recommendations to protect and conserve EFH.
2. Continue integrating MSA EFH consultations with ESA section 7 consultations.
3. Improve EFH conservation through internal and external partnerships to maximize resources and efforts, and to minimize and mitigate adverse effects on habitat.

4. Provide information about EFH to help raise awareness of threats and actions to minimize or avoid impacts.
5. Engage internally and externally in discussions and consultations on coastal and offshore projects that could impact fisheries, EFH, fishing access, and safety-at-sea.
6. Engage partners under FPA and FWCA to improve habitat and passage conditions for managed fisheries species.

## Science & Technology

### OBJECTIVE

Use the best available science, technology, and tools to inform management decisions, monitor fisheries, and help improve aquaculture practices.

### STRATEGIES

1. Work with the Science Centers to support the PFMC's research and annual stock assessment needs, including maintenance of existing surveys and development of new survey technologies and methods to assess populations in sensitive habitats.
2. Coordinate with the Science Centers and other partners to gain better understanding of non-fishing activities affecting EFH.
3. Better connect EFH protection and conservation to the productivity of managed species.
4. Improve communication among the WCR, Science Centers, and IATTC scientific staff on stock assessments for IATTC managed species.
5. Support NOAA Fisheries' Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Initiative<sup>2</sup> on the West Coast to better integrate the best, most cost-effective and appropriate technology into fisheries data collection and observations, and to improve the WCR's capabilities to perform and communicate in-season management.

6. Help support the state sampling programs that feed into PSMFC's Fisheries Information Networks (PacFIN and RecFIN) to improve fisheries data.
7. Support progress on ecosystem based fishery management approaches through the PFMC's Fishery Ecosystem Plan, NOAA's Integrated Ecosystem Assessment, contributions to annual state of the California Current Ecosystem reports, and coordination with the Science Centers to prioritize ecosystem research needs for fisheries and aquaculture.
8. Collaborate with the Science Centers and PFMC to identify how climate change and ocean acidification may affect West Coast fisheries, aquaculture, and EFH, and incorporate this information in long-term management strategies.
9. Work with the Science Centers to support the development of tools for identifying regulatory impacts to fishing communities.

<sup>2</sup> These include vessel monitoring systems (VMS), electronic logbooks (EL), video cameras for observer-type electronic monitoring (EM), electronic fish ticket (EFT) systems and other technologies that provide EM and electronic reporting (ER).



## **GOAL: Recover and conserve protected West Coast marine and anadromous species through partnerships and innovative science-based solutions.**

The WCR manages diverse protected species along the West Coast from blue whales, the largest animals to ever live, to invertebrates, such as abalone that fit in the palm of your hand. These species are key elements of the ecosystem and are critically important for our culture, recreation, and economy. Recovery and conservation of ESA-listed fish species, like salmon, also support our sustainable fisheries goal by providing the long-term foundation for commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. Conserving at-risk habitats contributes to ecosystem resilience.

There are approximately 50 ESA-listed species, distinct population segments, and evolutionarily significant units under WCR jurisdiction, including species of whales, pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), sea turtles, fish, and mollusks. Our ESA program supports a national focus on species needing immediate action to prevent extinction and species with identified actions that can be immediately implemented. Under the MMPA, we conserve and manage marine mammal populations along the West Coast.



Above: Dagger Falls. Photo: Enrique Patino, WCR



The WCR focuses on partnerships, minimizing adverse effects of Federal actions, and science-based solutions. Habitat protection and restoration are critical components of ecosystem function, and species recovery and conservation. We work with a range of partners from Federal agencies to individual landowners to ensure sufficient protection and restoration of habitats necessary for species recovery. We also focus on recovery and conservation of species and habitats using an ecosystem-based approach that considers benefits, interactions, and trade-offs for multiple species.

Table 5 identifies a list of strategies (not in priority order) that the WCR will pursue to achieve our Protected Resources goal and objectives for recovery, ESA consultations and support, marine mammal conservation, and science.



Left: Elwha dam deconstruction and habitat restoration. Photo: John McMillan, NWFSC

Top, left: California sea lions. Photo: Monica DeAngelis, WCR

Top, right: Shortbeaked common dolphin. Photo: SWFSC

Above: Juvenile Chinook salmon. Photo: John McMillan, NWFSC



## **GOAL: Recover and conserve protected West Coast marine and anadromous species through partnerships and innovative science-based solutions.**

### **Recovery**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Advance recovery of ESA-listed species and conservation of all species under our authority and the habitats on which they depend.

#### **STRATEGIES**

1. Complete recovery plans for all ESA-listed species in the WCR by prioritizing budget, staff resources, and external engagement.
2. Finish permitting processes and implementation plans for captive propagation and enhancement of Species of Concern and ESA-listed abalone and experimental reintroductions of priority salmon populations.
3. Execute high priority species and habitat conservation actions identified in recovery plans by leveraging partnerships and resources, and also through programs such as the PCSRF.
4. Engage partners under FPA and FWCA to improve habitat and passage conditions for all species under our authority.
5. Expand use and integration of all authorities under the ESA, MMPA, and FPA to advance species recovery and achieve recovery plan objectives.
6. Improve capacity of NOAA Fisheries and its partners to plan, implement, and monitor large-scale salmon habitat conservation and restoration programs.
7. Partner with Federal, state, and local agencies, stakeholders, tribes, institutions (museums, aquariums, academia, etc.), and the public to advance recovery plan objectives.
8. Design and implement habitat conservation actions to protect ESA-listed salmonids that support the Western Washington Tribal Treaty Rights at Risk initiative.

## ESA Consultations & Support

### OBJECTIVE

Provide timely and effective ESA assistance and consultations to partners and stakeholders.

### STRATEGIES

1. Complete and guide implementation of large-scale, complex ESA section 7 consultations to maximize benefits to ESA-listed species and their habitats.
2. Streamline the consultation process by expanding the number of actions covered by programmatic consultations and integrating management of multiple ESA-listed species where they co-occur.
3. Further advance the use of mitigation in ESA consultations, permits, and habitat conservation plans.
4. Support states and tribes seeking to align their activities with the ESA, through sections 6 and 10 and other programs.
5. Complete ESA consultations on hatchery management actions and provide assistance to hatchery operators in preparing for consultation.
6. Develop innovative approaches and tools to support protected species goals and habitat conservation, such as landowner incentives, education and outreach, and landscape-scale analysis and planning.

## Marine Mammal Conservation

### OBJECTIVE

Promote marine mammal monitoring and conservation, and minimize impacts through education, outreach, partnerships, and implementation of the MMPA.

### STRATEGIES

1. Coordinate West Coast marine mammal stranding program partners to gather and report information on marine mammals as indicators of ocean health, including population status, environmental conditions, contaminants, diseases, and human interactions.
2. Develop tools to increase response to human interactions with marine mammals and reduce harm to animals and people, including safety and impacts to fishing gear and catch, vessels, docks and marinas, as marine mammal populations grow.
3. Evaluate requests under section 120 of the MMPA to address impacts of particular pinnipeds on ESA-listed salmonid populations.
4. Evaluate intentional and incidental take of marine mammals under the MMPA to understand and minimize population level impacts.

## Science

### OBJECTIVE

Collaborate with Science Centers, stakeholders, and other partners to develop and use the best available science for the conservation and recovery of protected species.

### STRATEGIES

1. Increase cooperation with partners and stakeholders to improve monitoring for consultations, species status updates, and tracking of progress toward recovery.
2. Support Science Centers to develop expertise and tools to better manage real-time water operations and drought preparedness.
3. Coordinate with Science Centers to support ecosystem-based analyses that consider the effects of management actions (e.g., stock enhancement, habitat restoration) on multiple species, food webs, and the trade-offs involved.
4. Develop tools and models to understand and address threats to marine mammals, such as fishery interactions and hydro-acoustic impacts.
5. Advance cutting edge scientific techniques to support reintroductions.
6. Coordinate with Science Centers, co-managers, and partners to assess the relative importance of various habitat types and the effectiveness of salmonid habitat restoration methods and projects.
7. Ensure consistent application of climate science in ESA, MMPA, and NEPA analyses and decisions through regional and national climate policy efforts.



## **GOAL: Achieve the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and service in all regional operations.**

The WCR strives for organizational excellence because quality operations will help us achieve our fisheries and protected resources goals. Organizational excellence means being responsive, transparent, accountable, effective, and efficient in everything we do, whether it's administrative processes (such as budget execution and timekeeping) or program work (such as managing fisheries and completing ESA consultations). It also means living our core values as we focus on our people, processes, and tools. Our commitment to public service is reflected in the way we communicate, serve our customers, and manage our budget. Our commitment to growth and learning is reflected in the time we devote to internal alignment and the investment we make in staff development. Our commitment to solving problems is reflected in every objective and strategy in this strategic plan.

Table 6 identifies a list of strategies (not listed in priority order) that the WCR will pursue to achieve our Organizational Excellence goal and objectives for communications and customer service, fiscal integrity, internal alignment, and staff.

### **Communications & Customer Service**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Be pro-active in our communications and provide responsive and efficient service to internal and external partners and stakeholders.

#### **STRATEGIES**

1. Provide timely and thorough responses to information requests.
2. Maintain and improve online tools to meet customer needs, such as permit applications.
3. Ensure transparency through online and other tools that allow for internal and external tracking of agency actions (e.g., Public Consultation Tracking System, salmon recovery action mapping).
4. Provide documented and managed WCR data sets, including geospatial data, for internal and external customers.
5. Create and implement roll-out plans to effectively communicate the rationale and context for our management decisions and ensure the appropriate audiences are informed.
6. Maintain a user-friendly WCR website with useful and accessible information to support stakeholder understanding and engagement.
7. Develop web stories, fact sheets, and other materials, use social media, and participate in outreach events to inform stakeholders about management actions, accomplishments, and stewardship opportunities.

## Fiscal Integrity

### OBJECTIVE

Implement processes and tools for accountability and the responsible management of public funds.

### STRATEGIES

1. Integrate strategic planning with the budget process to maximize results and manage risks within current and expected resources.
2. Carry out NOAA Fisheries' annual priorities in the WCR through development of regional milestones and provide timely reporting of accomplishments.
3. Implement tools for efficient and effective planning, execution, and

4. Establish effective policies and processes for planning the WCR budget to ensure proper and complete expenditure of appropriated funds.
5. Provide WCR workforce and public with first-rate, environmentally sound and safe facilities, in proper alignment with WCR needs.

## Internal Alignment

### OBJECTIVE

Create an integrated, organized, and coordinated regional office to support staff, maximize resources, and improve Agency outcomes.

### STRATEGIES

1. Increase coordination with the Science Centers to align management needs and research plans through regular communications and strategic planning.
2. Coordinate with the NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center to align and maximize resources to restore fish habitat.
3. Coordinate and collaborate to support NOAA initiatives, such as the NOAA Habitat Blueprint Initiative, in the WCR.
4. Ensure internal coordination and consistency in implementing agency mandates and achieving priorities across the WCR utilizing the Regional Leadership Team, division managers, and cross-division subject matter teams.

5. Develop and maintain a comprehensive WCR Intranet for staff with internal resources and policies for quick reference.
6. Implement WCR-wide information technology and management plans and processes to provide user support, desktop, and server management, and information management to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, availability, and privacy of systems and information.
7. Use creative and technological solutions to facilitate staff engagement among offices in different locations, support cross-divisional teams, and enhance coordination across the WCR.

## Staff

### OBJECTIVE

Invest in staff growth and learning to create a resilient organization.

### STRATEGIES

1. Advance succession planning through the WCR Workforce Management Plan and develop training, mentoring, and shadowing programs to meet projected staffing needs.
2. Engage staff, particularly through the WCR Employee Communications and Worklife Committee, to identify presentations, activities, and events they believe will enhance workplace culture, job satisfaction, and morale.
3. Provide training opportunities to keep staff current in their fields, to improve and refine their interpersonal and communications skills, and to pursue individual development opportunities.

4. Provide training opportunities to WCR supervisors to maximize their leadership potential.
5. Work with NOAA to ensure WCR recruitment and other human resource management needs are met efficiently, effectively, and in a timely manner to support hiring and maintaining a highly skilled, diverse and dedicated workforce with special attention to mission critical occupations and associated essential skills.

## 20 IV. Highlights - Goals in Action

The goals identified in this strategic plan – sustainable and productive fisheries, recovering and conserving protected species, and organizational excellence – are closely integrated and work in concert across the WCR. Below are examples that highlight our work toward these goals and underscore the importance of partnerships in the face of complex natural resource challenges on the West Coast.

### Groundfish Catch Share Program

The West Coast Groundfish Catch Share program began in 2011 and consists of an individual fishing quota (IFQ) system for the shore-based trawl fleet, and cooperative programs for the at-sea mothership and catcher-processor fleets. Over ten years in the making, the program has resulted in significant improvements in the sustainability of the West Coast trawl fishery, with recent endorsements by the Marine Stewardship Council and Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch. NOAA Fisheries, the West Coast groundfish

fleet, the PFMC, PSMFC, and the West Coast states have worked together toward a common goal of healthy, sustainable fisheries, and resilient fishing communities. In addition to catch share quotas, the West Coast Groundfish IFQ Fishery includes a vastly improved monitoring system—using 100% monitoring of catch at sea and 100% monitoring of landings on shore. This refined monitoring system allows the fishery to be managed on an individual vessel basis, rather than via fleet-wide measures.

Though the program is still new, there are noticeable trends. Catch shares boost sustainability and profits. Results indicate a substantial reduction in the amount of bycatch and increased flexibility for fishermen because, under the program, they can be more selective in when they fish and what species they target. Bycatch of overfished species and Pacific halibut has declined in the first three years of catch shares compared to the three years prior. For instance, the catches of cowcod, darkblotched rockfish, Pacific Ocean perch and yelloweye rockfish have dropped by more than 50 percent compared to the years before catch shares. This is good news for certain species that need rebuilding and for fishermen who can focus on their target species. Catch of target species has steadily increased since the program started, with catch of groundfish other than Pacific whiting increasing from 24% to 35% between 2011 and 2013. Revenues are also up, averaging over \$50 million from 2011-2013 compared to \$38 million (average from 2006-2010) before catch shares. Vessels are making fewer trips per week but catching more fish and earning more revenue per trip under catch shares, a sign of improving efficiency.



The WCR continues to work with the PFMC, the states, fishermen, and fishing communities to make further improvements to the program aimed at maintaining the conservation outcomes of the program, allowing fishermen more flexibility, and reducing costs for fishermen, processors, and managers. A major focus of these efforts is the pending implementation of electronic monitoring exempted fishing permits during the 2015 groundfish season. In addition, the WCR will work with the PFMC to conduct a 5-year review of the program beginning in 2016.

**Left: Catch monitor inspects off-loaded catch. Photo: PSMFC**  
**Above: Processing whiting in Newport, Oregon. Photo: NOAA**



# Puget Sound

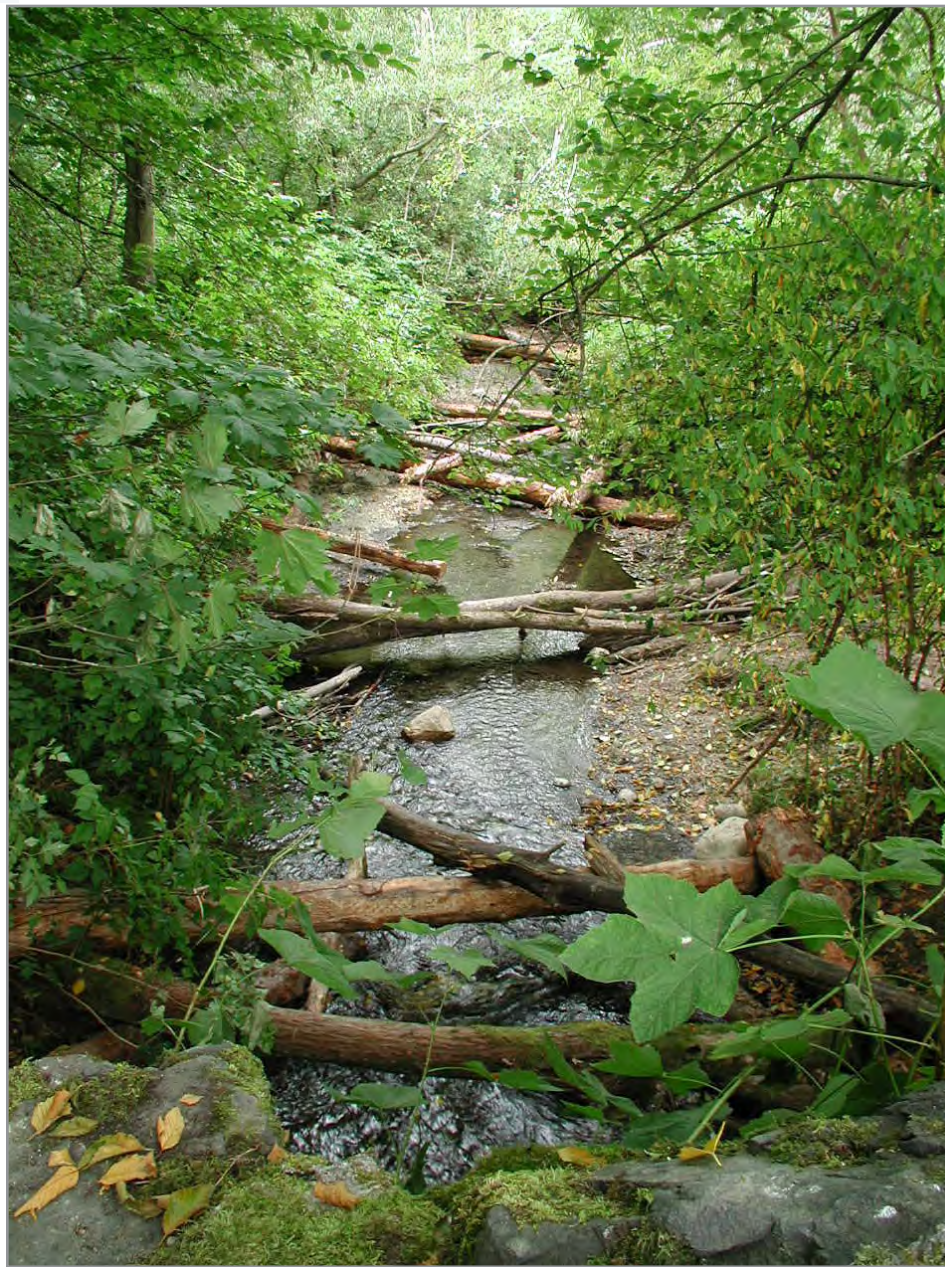
We are working to tie our recovery efforts in Puget Sound into an ecosystem approach that supports our sustainable fisheries and protected species goals, and meets our trust responsibilities for Western Washington treaty tribes. Fisheries in Puget Sound are economically and culturally important. The WCR works with co-managers, the State of Washington and Western Washington treaty tribes, to ensure that management plans for the 133 salmon and steelhead hatchery programs are consistent with the ESA and protect essential fish habitat. We are also working with many partners to implement recovery plans for ESA-listed Puget Sound Chinook salmon, Hood Canal Summer Chum salmon, and Lake Ozette sockeye salmon, and to develop a plan for Puget Sound Steelhead. The plans include actions to restore the watersheds critical for recovery of the species, and to address the human and environmental threats they face.

Salmon are an important link to other species in the Puget Sound ecosystem. They serve as prey for marine mammals and as predators on larval rockfish. Puget Sound is home to endangered Southern Resident killer whales, which face threats from pollution, a limited food supply (mainly Chinook salmon), and vessel traffic and noise. Because Chinook abundance is very important to survival and recovery of Southern Residents, managing salmon fisheries to account for the needs of these whales and working toward salmon recovery is essential. We also work with state and local law enforcement, as well

as stakeholders, to educate recreational boaters, the whale watching industry, and the public about the importance of keeping their distance in order to conserve and recover these whales. Our staff in Seattle works with our partners to reduce threats to the Southern Resident killer whales as part of the comprehensive program laid out in the 2008 recovery plan.

We are also working with partners and co-managers to recover Puget Sound's threatened and endangered rockfish by reducing threats like unintended catch in fisheries and entanglement in derelict fishing gear. Partnering with recreational anglers, the state, the NWFSC, and others, we work to develop innovative techniques that anglers can use to release rockfish accidentally caught in fisheries. All of these techniques will improve the survival of the released fish and contribute to the diversity and health of the Puget Sound ecosystem.

Many of our solutions for Puget Sound focus on habitat. We have developed strong conservation partnerships with landowners, the cities of Seattle, Tacoma and Kent, and two state agencies that implement approved Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) on several hundred thousand acres of salmon-watersheds and marine waters. These seven HCPs conserve habitats for all protected salmon and steelhead, while habitats for many other species of unlisted fishes benefit from assurance of instream flows, science-led management of commercial forests, and fisheries regulated with increased attention for ESA-listed species.



Anadromous fish habitat restoration. Photo: Joel Moribe, WCR

We have also collaborated with the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office to provide expedited review of hundreds of salmon habitat restoration projects in Puget Sound. The latest additions to shoreline restoration are 11 proposed sites that will restore an estimated 5,300 acres of nearshore ecosystems, with an estimated total project cost of about \$1.1 billion. The Puget Sound Action Plan is part of NOAA's Habitat Blueprint and brings Federal agencies together to conserve habitat to ensure the benefits of our natural resources are available for coastal communities and future generations. The NWFSC's research and models, such as the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for Puget

Sound, integrate a range of social, economic, and natural science data and information, and will inform our efforts to support a healthy and resilient Puget Sound ecosystem. The Washington Shellfish Initiative brings important elements of the National Shellfish initiative to bear in Puget Sound, supporting aquaculture as a tool for sustainable fisheries and restoring native shellfish. Through all of these efforts, and as part of other efforts such as the Puget Sound Partnership, we are expanding partnerships, prioritizing activities, and improving our focus to understand, protect, and restore habitat for the benefit of living marine resources and coastal communities.



Above: Farmed Pacific oysters. Photo: Taylor Shellfish



Top, right: Southern Resident killer whale and ferry in Puget Sound. Photo: NOAA



Center: Seining. Photo: Joel Moribe, WCR



Bottom: Yelloweye rockfish. Photo: Florian Graner, Sealife Productions



# Columbia River

Columbia River Basin resources provide significant economic and environmental benefits to the Pacific Northwest. The basin's water projects and dams provide the region with energy, flood control, and water transportation that extends more than 900 miles inland. Historically, the basin supported thriving salmon and steelhead populations. Our Oregon, Washington, and Idaho staff work with our co-managers and other partners to promote the conservation and recovery of eighteen salmon and steelhead species in the basin. Although thirteen of those species are now listed as threatened or endangered, the basin continues to support commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries that hold deep cultural and economic significance.

Recovery plans are in place for nine of the 13 ESA-listed salmon and steelhead species in the basin, and plans addressing the remaining four species are nearing completion. We are working with our Federal, state, tribal, and local partners to implement the plans and engage in on-the-ground restoration. Federal lands play a significant role in providing an anchor for species recovery in the Columbia Basin, and we work with our Federal land management partners to protect critical habitat from ongoing threats such as logging, mining, irrigation diversions and grazing. In addition, our biological opinion on the Federal Columbia River Power System provides a framework for protecting salmon and steelhead and

improving their survival. The opinion provides a comprehensive program to improve passage conditions for migrating fish through the hydropower system, as well as actions to protect and restore habitats. We also work with our partners on research, monitoring, and evaluation programs designed to provide the best available science to inform implementation and ensure adequate protection to the species.

Our administration of Mitchell Act funds supports improved fish passage and construction and maintenance of screens on irrigation diversions in the basin; these funds have also supported the construction and operation of more than 20 salmon and steelhead hatchery facilities, and the operations of 62 hatchery programs. In 2015, informed by our final environmental impact statement, we developed an approach to ensure that Mitchell Act-funded hatchery production works in concert with salmon and steelhead recovery efforts, while still supporting tribal and non-tribal fisheries in the Columbia River Basin and Pacific Ocean (from northern California through southeast Alaska).



Above: Columbia River Gorge. Photo: Bala Sivakumar, Wikimedia Commons  
Middle: Spring Chinook salmon, Carson National Hatchery. Photo: Cheri Anderson  
Bottom: Fish ladder. Photo: Bonneville Power Administration

## 24 Klamath River Basin

The WCR is working with numerous partners to find lasting solutions to water and land management for the needs of ESA-listed fish and the communities dependent on the resources of the Klamath Basin. Until private hydroelectric dams were constructed, the Klamath Basin supported the third largest salmon fishery on the West Coast (early 1900s estimates of over 1 million fish per year). A Chinook run, supplemented by hatchery-produced fish, still supports commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries, but coho and Pacific eulachon in the basin are protected under the ESA. Three tribes maintain Federally recognized fishing rights; two of the Tribes are located below the dams and have maintained a salmon fishery, but the other tribe, located above the dams, has been unable to harvest salmon for almost 100 years.

Restoring the Klamath Basin ecosystem has been a focus for staff in Arcata, CA, for many years. In 2010, NOAA Fisheries signed the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement, which provides a framework for removal of four Klamath River dams by 2020. NOAA Fisheries also signed a letter of support for the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement, which provides processes for fisheries restoration, reliable water and power supply, and community support in the Klamath Basin. To address remaining water issues, the WCR also worked with partners and stakeholders on the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement, signed in 2014. Combined, the agreements represent the largest dam removal and river restoration project in U.S. history and serve as a model for resolving natural resource conflicts in diverse rural communities.

Our work in the basin will also be guided by the 2014 ESA recovery plan for Southern Oregon/Northern California coast coho salmon – the product of a multi-year, collaborative process that included tribes, Federal, state, and local governments, industry, environmental groups, and the public. Implementing the recovery actions will provide substantial benefits to local communities, such as habitat restoration jobs and reduced flooding risks, and has potential in the long-term to restore coho runs for fisheries not seen in decades.



Top: Klamath River, Estuary, California. Photo: Thomas Dunklin

Bottom: Spawning coho salmon. Photo: Thomas Dunklin

# California's Central Valley

The watersheds of California's Central Valley flow into the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary, forming the largest estuarine system on the West Coast of the Americas and supporting an abundance of wildlife, including ESA-listed Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, California Central Valley steelhead, North American green sturgeon, and also economically important Central Valley fall and late fall-run Chinook salmon. Habitat modifications, including severely degraded floodplains, channelized rivers, multiple dams and diversions, introductions of non-native predators, and hatchery practices have contributed to the extinctions of many salmon populations and the decline of the remaining populations. Water management creates ongoing challenges, especially during periods of drought, as

two-thirds of California's people and 4.5 million acres of farmland receive some part of their water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta).

Our staff in Sacramento, CA, are engaged in a number of efforts with many partners – Federal and state agencies, private landowners, water users, and non-governmental organizations – to balance the limited water supply with the needs of ESA-listed fish, and commercial and recreational salmon fisheries, and to restore habitat and key populations in priority locations. Our activities are guided by the Central Valley Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan. For example, watershed priorities established in the recovery plan are guiding decisions about operations of the Bureau of Reclamation's Central Valley Project concerning the amount and

timing of water releases and diversions and implementation of a new collaborative Voluntary Drought Initiative. In addition, we are working to restore habitat and reintroduce spring-run Chinook salmon to the San Joaquin and Yuba Rivers, and winter-run Chinook salmon to the McCloud River and Battle Creek. We are partnering with key agencies in planning efforts to repair the aging flood control structure and levee system of the Delta. Doing so will protect existing habitat, restore floodplain habitat in key locations such as the Yolo Bypass, and meet critical public safety needs of enhanced flood protection.

We are also collaborating with Federal and state agencies to achieve the co-equal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration in the Delta, as well as address drought conditions.



**Left: Salmon spawning in Butte Creek, California. Photo: John Icanberry, California Department of Water Resources**  
**Above: Shasta Dam**  
**Right: Aerial view of the Delta. Photo: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation**

## 26 Southern California Bight

The Southern California Bight is a unique sub-region of the California Current marine ecosystem encompassing the shores of southern California. The Bight includes diverse landscapes and habitats, estuarine and marine species, and cultures and economies that generate numerous complex coastal and marine resource management issues. It is home to more than 21 million people and is one of the Nation's most powerful economic engines producing more than a trillion dollars in economic output per year. The largest industrial Port complex in the Nation is found here, as well as the largest concentration of military installations and activity on the West Coast and the highest concentration of marine oil and gas infrastructure on the West Coast. Ocean recreation is also a major industry, including fishing, whale watching, sailing, and scuba diving. Despite these pressures, the Bight continues to support economically significant commercial and recreational fisheries and provides important ecosystem services. The WCR works with a broad array of partners and stakeholders to conserve protected species, manage sustainable fisheries, and conserve valuable coastal habitats in the Bight. We engage in interagency consultations and collaborate with the SWFSC, academia and other scientific experts, government agencies, and environmental organizations to improve our scientific understanding of the area resources and implement conservation actions.

The WCR works to conserve and restore the ecological integrity of the Bight's coastal and nearshore ecosystems. The Bight's diverse coastal watersheds support the southernmost population of steelhead in the United States. This endangered population is critically low and requires significant conservation and implementation of recovery actions to ensure its continued existence. The nearshore marine environment includes productive habitats, such as embayments, lagoons, and wetlands; various seagrass communities; and temperate rocky reefs. Rocky reef and kelp communities along the mainland and Channel Islands are habitat areas of particular concern for various Federally managed groundfish and are essential for economically significant recreational and commercial fish species. Endangered

white and black abalone species and other abalone species of concern are also found in these habitats. The Bight's seagrasses and embayments provide valuable ecosystem functions and services, and they are foraging habitat for threatened green sea turtles. Resident populations of green sea turtles have established in the bays of San Diego and San Pedro.



Top: Blue Whale. Photo: Elizabeth Petras, WCR

Bottom: Coastal pelagic species commercial fishing vessel, San Pedro, Port of Los Angeles. Photo: Josh Lindsay, WCR

The offshore marine environment provides important migratory corridors and feeding grounds for several large whale species, sea turtles, and an abundance of fish species. Seasonally, a high concentration of endangered blue whales is found in the Bight, and the WCR has worked with government and industry partners to reduce impacts of vessel traffic on the species. The area is important to commercial and recreational highly migratory species fisheries, and the commercial coastal pelagic species fishery. Pacific bluefin tuna use this area to forage before heading back to Japanese waters to spawn, and most of the West Coast commercial fleet's harvest of swordfish occurs in the Bight. Its offshore environments harbor deep sea corals, a mosaic of deep ocean basins, and unique geologic formations and islands, which are important for rebuilding previously overfished species, such as cowcod and bocaccio, and a wide diversity of other marine life. We are working with the state of California, the PFMC, and other partners to reduce the impacts of fishing in sensitive habitat areas, such as by establishing various fishery conservation areas. In collaboration with our Science Centers and other partners, the WCR monitors and assesses the importance of these areas for our trust resources.



**Top:** Tijuana estuary, California/Mexico border.

**Photo:** Bryant Chesney, WCR

**Right:** Surveying rocky intertidal habitat for abalone, Malibu, California. **Photo:** Adam Obaza, WCR

**Far right:** Green sea turtle. **Photo:** NOAA Permit #14510

# Appendix I: Alignment with DOC and NOAA

NOAA Fisheries is a line office of NOAA, which is located within the Department of Commerce. The WCR’s strategic plan was informed by the strategic plans and planning documents of DOC, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries, as well as strategic plans developed by science centers and restoration centers along the West Coast. In addition we have incorporated objectives and strategies that are consistent and support headquarters office strategic plans and themes.

**Strategic plans and planning documents that currently guide NOAA Fisheries:**

- Department of Commerce Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2014-2018 (2014)
- NOAA’s Next – Generation Strategic Plan (2010)
- NOAA Annual Guidance Memorandum (2012)
- NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2014 (2013)



Figure 4. Word cluster from the DOC, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries strategic planning documents

The priorities relevant to the WCR are identified on these two pages.

Department of Commerce (DOC)	
<p>DOC is comprised of 12 bureaus that work in five key areas: trade and investment, innovation, environment, data and operational excellence. NOAA furthers the Department’s mission with stewardship of the ocean’s resources, which contribute more than \$250 billion annually to the Nation’s economy.</p> <p><b>The DOC Strategic Goal, Objective, and Strategies Most Relevant to NOAA Fisheries</b></p> <p><b>Environmental Goal</b></p> <p>Ensure communities and businesses have the necessary information, products, and services to prepare for and prosper in a changing environment.</p> <p><b>DOC Objective 3.4</b></p> <p>Foster healthy and sustainable marine resources, habitats, and ecosystems through improved management and partnerships.</p> <p><b>DOC Strategies for Objective 3.4</b></p> <p><b>Strengthen capabilities to assess and monitor fish and protected resources.</b></p> <p>Ensuring sustainable populations of living marine resources is a key Departmental mandate. NOAA will increase the precision of stock assessments, performing more robust monitoring, and applying ecosystem-based management to ensure healthy, sustainable populations of living</p>	<p>marine resources. NOAA will incorporate integrated biological, physical, and chemical data and ecosystem modeling into fish stock and protected species assessments. NOAA will also produce more advanced technologies for monitoring of living marine resources and ecosystems.</p> <p><b>Improve recovery of listed species through innovative partnerships.</b></p> <p>International, Federal, state, local, tribal, and nongovernmental organizations play a role in conservation. NOAA will strengthen partnerships with these stakeholder groups to ensure greater collaboration toward the recovery and conservation of protected species in marine and coastal ecosystems. Greater collaboration will improve the development and implementation of effective recovery and conservation plans for marine mammals and endangered and threatened species.</p> <p><b>Enhance place-based conservation.</b></p> <p>Through its coastal management and place-based conservation programs, NOAA will expand protections at current sites, add protections at new sites, and work with public and private partners. This place-based approach will preserve the economic and environmental benefits of these special places to local communities. NOAA will implement efforts such as the Habitat Blueprint framework, which employs partnerships to improve habitat conditions for fisheries, and coastal and marine life, to achieve economic, cultural, and environmental benefits.</p> <p><i>--Department of Commerce Strategic Plan (2014)</i></p>

## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

NOAA advances our understanding of and ability to anticipate changes in the Earth's environment by improving society's ability to make scientifically informed decisions, and by conserving and managing ocean and coastal resources.

NOAA Mission	NOAA Vision
<p><b>Science, Service, and Stewardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts,</li> <li>• Share that knowledge and information with others, and</li> <li>• Conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies that are resilient in the face of change.</b></p> <p>Resilient ecosystems, communities, and economies can maintain and improve their health and vitality over time by anticipating, absorbing, and diffusing change. This vision of resilience will guide NOAA and its partners in a collective effort to reduce the vulnerability of communities and ecological systems in the short-term, while helping society avoid or adapt to long-term environmental, social, and economic changes.</p> <p>-- <i>NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (2010)</i></p>

With the release in 2010 of NOAA's Strategic Plan and Executive Summary, and in the 2013 Addendum, Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Acting Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, called on NOAA to focus on the following areas:

**Climate:** Through collaborative strategies, continue to advance the observations, modeling, and research necessary to understand climate change and its impacts; and transition mature climate science into regular, reliable, and relevant information services;

**Weather:** NOAA will build a "Weather-ready" nation by preserving and improving its ability to provide timely and accurate forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property through science, technology, infrastructure improvements and collaborative efforts with partners;

**Oceans:** NOAA will advance our efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine fisheries and recovery of protected species and their habitats;

**Coasts:** NOAA will deliver integrated data, information, products, and services needed to support resilient coastal communities and economies;

**Science and Technology:** NOAA will focus on developing systems-level understanding of ecosystems and phenomena—across missions and disciplines—with the goal of increasing the resilience of ecosystems, economies, and communities;

**Engagement:** NOAA will expand efforts to listen and respond to our customers' and stakeholders' concerns and better relate NOAA mission responsibilities and activities to those concerns; and

**Organization and Administration:** NOAA will further capitalize on recent initiatives to cut costs and improve effectiveness.

As one of five NOAA line offices, NOAA Fisheries' mission is most closely tied to the goal for Healthy Oceans identified in the Draft Goal Implementation Plan, 2012.

### NOAA's Healthy Oceans Goal: Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity sustained within healthy and productive ecosystems.

Healthy Ocean's goal is to ensure that ocean, estuarine, and related ecosystems – and the NOAA trust resources that inhabit them – are resilient and sustainable in the face of increasing threats and changing conditions. A sound understanding of these ecosystems, communication of this knowledge to decision makers and stakeholders, and the capacity and resources to support key NOAA programs are critical to achieving this goal.

#### Strategic objectives for this Goal:

- Improved understanding of ecosystems to inform resource management decisions
- Recovered and healthy marine and coastal species
- Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities
- Sustainable fisheries and safe seafood for healthy populations and vibrant communities

#### NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries)

NOAA Fisheries' annual guidance memo provides guidance to all NOAA Fisheries employees in executing our mission responsibilities by establishing a framework for development of annual priority milestones. These priorities consider the core mission functions in context of current fiscal conditions.

For fiscal years 2014 and 2015, the focus has remained on the agency's two core mandates:

- Ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations.
- Recover and conserve protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences.

All other NOAA Fisheries programs, projects, and investments are to be designed and conducted in a manner that supports these two core mission functions. Within NOAA Fisheries, the Office of Protected Resources has identified two national themes for recovery of priority species and integrating climate change in ESA and MMPA.

# 30 Appendix II: Key co-managers, partners, and stakeholders working with the WCR

Table 7: Partial list of co-managers, partners, and stakeholders.

## Co-managers, Partners, and Stakeholders

- Pacific Fishery Management Council
- States of California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Water Resources
- California State Water Resources Control Board
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
- Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho Office of Species Conservation
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Tribes in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, and Nevada (see Table 8)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
- Pacific Salmon Commission
- International Pacific Halibut Commission
- Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Navy
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Federal Highways Administration
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Bonneville Power Administration
- Public Utilities
- Northwest Power and Conservation Council
- NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center
- NOAA Fisheries Northwest Fisheries Science Center
- NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center (Northwest)
- NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center (Southwest)
- NOAA Fisheries headquarters offices
- NOAA Fisheries Alaska Fisheries Science Center
- NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Science Center
- NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office
- NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
- NOAA General Counsel
- NOAA Ocean Service
- NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Washington Sea Grant
- Oregon Sea Grant
- California Sea Grant
- University of Southern California Sea Grant
- Port Authorities
- City and County governments
- Commercial fishing industry
- Canned tuna industry
- Aquaculture industry
- Recreational fishing constituents
- Commercial whale watch industry
- Agricultural and municipal water users
- Commercial forest landowners
- Private power producers
- Environmental NGOs
- Aquariums and museums
- General Public



Table 8: Partial list of tribal co-managers, partners, and stakeholders.

## Tribal Co-managers and Partners

- Burns Paiute Tribe
- Coeur D'alene Tribe
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation Of Oregon
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe
- Kalispel Tribe
- Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
- Shoshone-Paiute Tribe
- Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Chehalis Tribe
- Hoh Tribe
- Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
- Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
- Lummi Indian Nation
- Makah Indian Tribe
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Nooksack Indian Tribe
- Point No Point Treaty Council
- Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
- Puyallup Tribe
- Quileute Indian Tribe
- Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe
- Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe
- Skokomish Tribe
- Skagit System Cooperative
- Snoqualmie Tribe
- Squaxin Island Tribe
- Stillaguamish Tribe
- Suquamish Tribe
- Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
- Tulalip Tribes
- Upper Skagit Tribe
- Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon
- Coquille Indian Tribe
- Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians
- Klamath Tribe
- Siletz Tribe
- Hoopa Valley Tribe
- Karuk Tribe
- Yurok Tribe

### Intertribal Commissions

- Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)
- Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT)
- Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation
- Klamath River Inter-Tribal Fish and Water Commission

## NOAA FISHERIES WEST COAST REGION OFFICE LOCATIONS

### WASHINGTON

#### Seattle

7600 Sand Point Way Northeast  
Seattle, WA 98115  
206-526-6150; Fax 206-526-6426

#### Lacey

510 Desmond Drive Southeast  
Suite 103  
Lacey, WA 98503  
360-753-9530; Fax 360-753-9517

#### Ellensburg

304 South Water, #201  
Ellensburg, WA 98926  
509-962-8911; Fax 509-962-8544

### OREGON

#### Portland

1201 Northeast Lloyd Boulevard,  
Suite 1100  
Portland, OR 97232  
503-230-5400; Fax 503-230-5435

#### La Grande

3502 Highway 30  
La Grande, OR 97850  
541-975-1835; Fax 541-975-1973

#### Roseburg

2900 Stewart Parkway Northwest  
Roseburg, OR 97471  
541-957-3383; Fax 541-957-3386

### IDAHO

#### Grangeville

104 Airport Road  
Grangeville, ID 83530  
208-983-4061; Fax 208-983-4069

#### Boise

800 E. Park Blvd, Suite 220, Plaza IV  
Suite 220  
Boise, ID 83712-7768  
208-378-5696; Fax 208-378-5699

#### Salmon

1206 South Challis Street  
Salmon, Idaho 83467  
208-756-5100; Fax 208-756-5199  
254-377-4730 Satellite phone

### CALIFORNIA

#### Sacramento

650 Capitol Mall, Suite 5-100  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
916-930-3600; Fax 916-930-3629

#### Long Beach

501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200  
Long Beach, CA 90802  
562-980-4000; Fax 562-980-4018

#### Arcata

1655 Heindon Road  
Arcata, CA 95521  
707-822-7201; Fax 707-825-4840

#### Santa Rosa

777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 325  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404  
707-387-0737; Fax 707-578-3435



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**



Dive survey. Photo: Adam Obaza, WCR

**NOAA Fisheries West Coast  
Region Strategic Plan  
2016-2020**

Issued June 2015

National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway  
SSMC 3, F/SF, Room 13362  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
[www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)

For further information or to  
download a PDF file of this plan:  
[www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov)



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

