

NOAA FISHERIES

Recreational Fisheries

It is the policy of NOAA Fisheries to foster, support, and enhance a broadly accessible and diverse array of sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries for the benefit and enjoyment of the nation.

National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy Goals

1. Support and maintain sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries resources
2. Promote saltwater recreational fishing for the benefit of the nation
3. Enable enduring participation in, and enjoyment of, saltwater recreational fisheries through science-based conservation and management.

Progress Update: National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Implementation Plan



Photo: R. Yamada

Commitment and Dedication

NOAA Fisheries is committed to forging an ever-stronger partnership with the saltwater recreational fishing community. We remain dedicated to fostering, supporting, and enhancing a broadly accessible and diverse array of sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries for the benefit and enjoyment of the nation.

Achieving this vision, crafted in collaboration with the recreational fishing community and affirmed in the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy, takes more than words; it takes planning, hard work, and perseverance. The 2015-2018 National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy Implementation Plan was NOAA's first step under the Policy to develop recreational fisheries as a key agency focus, and serves as a project roadmap. This document highlights some of NOAA Fisheries' work to fulfill the commitments made in the Implementation Plan. In addition, extensive agency activities are taking place outside of the Implementation Plan that benefit recreational species and anglers.

Fulfilling Commitments

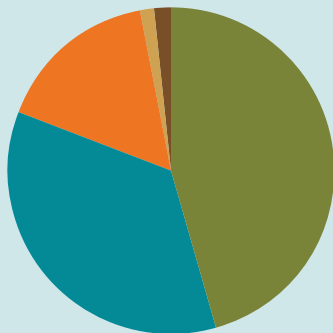
In the first two years of the four-year Implementation Plan, NOAA Fisheries has made substantial progress on or completed more than 80 percent of the identified projects, with another 16 percent of projects in early phases. Despite real progress in rebuilding overfished stocks, recreational fishermen and managers still face numerous challenges. The progress documented in this status update demonstrates that we are working hard to deliver on our commitments, and that recreational fisheries are and will remain a priority for NOAA Fisheries.



National Guiding Principles

1. Support ecosystem conservation and enhancement
2. Promote public access to quality recreational fishing opportunities
3. Coordinate with state and federal management entities
4. Advance innovative solutions to evolving science, management, and environmental challenges
5. Provide scientifically sound and trusted social, cultural, economic, and ecological information
6. Communicate and engage with the recreational fishing public

National Implementation Plan Progress

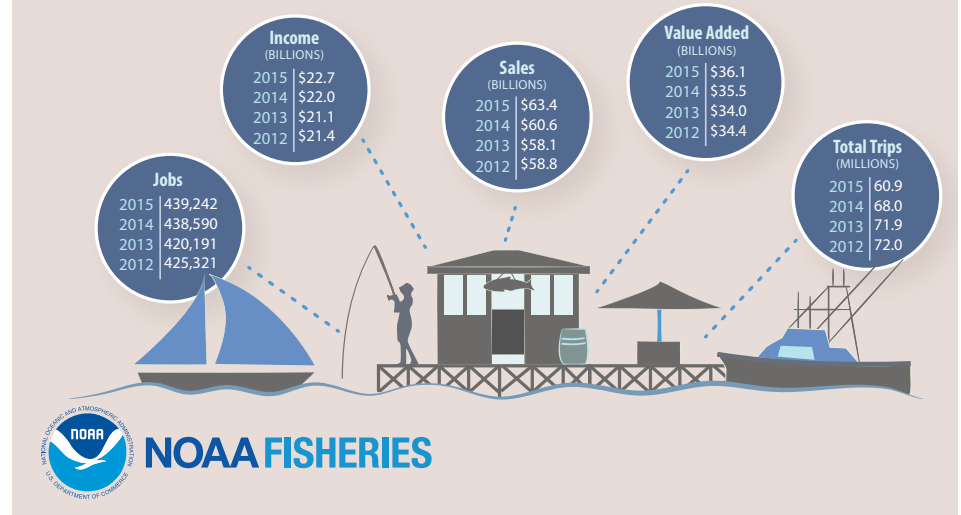


- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Substantial / Tangible Progress
- Initiated
- No Progress
- No Longer Applicable

Importance of Saltwater Recreational Fishing

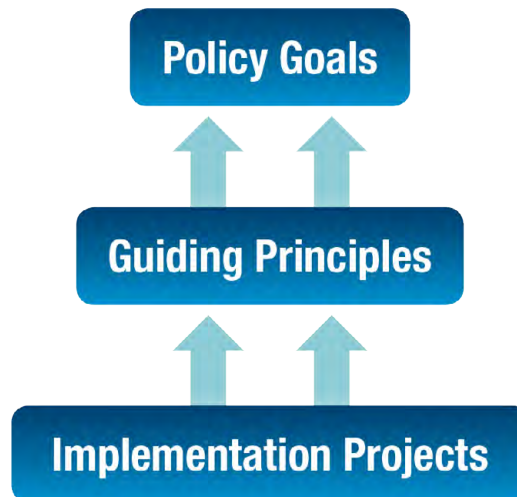
NOAA Fisheries recognizes that saltwater recreational fishing is integral to the culture and economic vitality of coastal communities. In 2015, an estimated 8.9 million saltwater anglers took approximately 61 million fishing trips, spending more than \$29 billion on trips and durable fishing equipment. The economic impacts of this activity supported 439,000 jobs, generated more than \$63 billion in sales impacts, and contributed \$36 billion to the national gross domestic product.

U.S. Recreational Fisheries Economic Impact Trends, 2015



Structure and Content

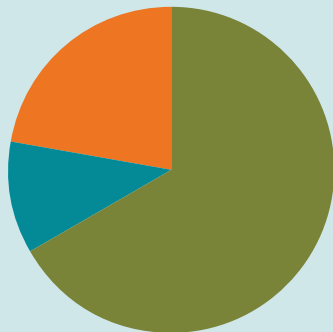
The National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy established three overarching goals supported by six guiding principles, detailed at left. The National Recreational Fisheries Implementation Plan identified 68 specific projects and actions, which are nested within the six guiding principles. This update discusses the status of specific implementation projects by guiding principle in an effort to convey the scope of work accomplished by NOAA Fisheries. Though much is included, the work detailed here is just a portion carried out by NOAA Fisheries in support of the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Initiative.





Guiding Principle 1 Project Status

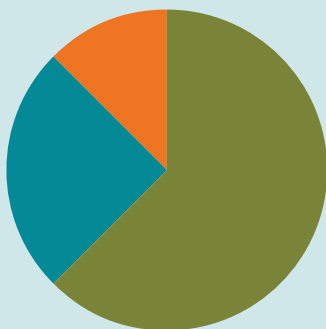
Support ecosystem conservation and enhancement



- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Substantial/Tangible Progress
- Initiated

Guiding Principle 2 Project Status

Promote public access to quality recreational fishing opportunities



- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Initiated
- No Progress

Support Ecosystem Conservation and Enhancement

Recreational anglers know that healthy marine ecosystems are the foundation of vibrant saltwater recreational fisheries. Achieving high-quality recreational fisheries requires a thoughtful, science-based approach to conserve healthy fish stocks and improve conditions where needed.

Implementation Highlights

Advance adoption of release survival techniques and best practices to reduce impacts of recreational fisheries • Status: Permanent Activity

In support of the ecosystem conservation and enhancement principle, NOAA Fisheries has distributed thousands of fish descending devices to anglers, both directly and through grants to states and Marine Fisheries Commission partners. In addition, the agency has prioritized and funded release mortality science internally and externally through various grant programs, published a Release Mortality Science Plan in 2016, and hosted recreational fisheries release mortality symposia at both the 2016 American Fisheries Society meeting and the 2017 World Recreational Fisheries Conference.

Host a workshop to assess the current state of the science, best practices, and potential benefits of artificial reefs • Status: Completed

NOAA Fisheries partnered with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to host the National Artificial Reef Workshop in 2016. More than 75 state and federal partners, academics, and fishermen participated in the workshop. Participants found the workshop timing helpful in understanding the current state of artificial reef science as well as regional differences in using artificial reefs to increase fishing access and satisfaction, especially with NOAA and the Deepwater Horizon trustees identifying sites offshore of Texas, Mississippi, and Florida for potential artificial reef deployment.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Provide federal grants to investigate bycatch and release mortality.
- Advance adoption of release survival techniques by communicating research findings.
- Support research to improve knowledge of ecosystem linkages between inshore habitats and offshore production of recreationally important fisheries.

Promote public access to quality recreational fishing opportunities

The opportunity to pursue fish with a reasonable likelihood of catching fish is a fundamental tenet of recreational fishing. Promoting and supporting access to quality fishing opportunities can take many forms. From ensuring healthy, abundant fish stocks to adjusting and streamlining regulatory mechanisms, each is important in its own way and all are integral to keeping anglers on the water and contributing to coastal economies.

Implementation Highlights

Issue final guidance on fishery quota allocation review and analysis • Status: Completed

In 2016, working with regional fishery management council partners, NOAA Fisheries established the first-ever policy to ensure relevancy of fishery quota allocations with evolving fishery conditions by requiring periodic evaluations. The policy responded to longstanding concerns that the quota allocation review process was unresponsive to changing fishery conditions.



Guiding Principle 3 Project Status

Coordinate with state and federal management entities



- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Substantial/Tangible Progress
- Initiated
- No Longer Applicable

Engage the recreational fishing community in habitat restoration projects to preserve and enhance fishing opportunities and improve ecosystem health • Status: Permanent Activity

In 2016, NOAA Fisheries—along with project partners the Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources—finished construction of an artificial oyster reef alongside the Bill Burton Fishing Pier, improving fishing opportunities for fishermen and enhancing local habitat.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Engage the recreational community in habitat restoration, habitat focus areas, and others to preserve and enhance fishing opportunities.
- Foster additional fishing opportunities by presenting information on conservation gains to fishery managers.

Coordinate with state and federal management partners

The complexity of managing our nation’s coastal and ocean resources and facilitating public access to them requires coordination and cooperation between state and federal managers. From maintaining abundant natural resources to establishing consistent regulations, close coordination brings greater benefits to anglers.

Implementation Highlights

Engage state and federal agencies to identify shared habitat objectives and execution strategies benefiting recreationally important species • Status: Substantial Progress

In 2016, NOAA provided more than \$200,000 in federal grants to the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game in support of the Carver Cotton Gin Dam Removal and Satucket River Restoration Project, and provided \$1 million to partners in Maryland to remove the Bloede Dam. Both of these projects will benefit recreationally important species and improve fishing opportunities for anglers.

Enhance coordination with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), including in identifying of potential Sanctuary Advisory Council nominees and focused outreach to recreational fishing interests to increase angler participation in the Sanctuary management process • Status: Permanent Activity

Beyond helping to identify recreational fisheries nominees for the Sanctuary Advisory Councils, NOAA Fisheries partnered with ONMS to host a constituent-driven workshop discussing recreational fishing within the national marine sanctuaries system. The workshop resulted in a list of priorities and concerns from the recreational fishing community and initial actions ONMS will address.

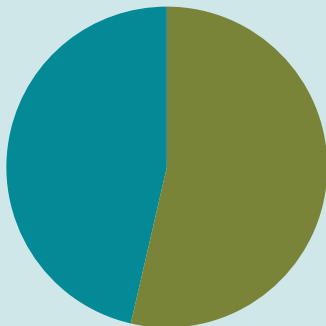
Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Conserve forage fish through targeted habitat restoration projects and by working with partners to provide passage for diadromous forage fish at hydropower dams.
- Support research to improve knowledge of ecosystem linkages between inshore habitats.
- Develop materials addressing fisheries science and management issues important for recreational fisheries to support improved understanding by federal fisheries management council members.



Guiding Principle 4 Project Status

Advance innovative solutions to evolving science, management, and environmental challenges



- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Substantial/Tangible Progress

Guiding Principle 5 Project Status

Provide scientifically sound and trusted social, cultural, economic, and biological data



- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Substantial/Tangible Progress
- Initiated

Advance innovative solutions to evolving science management and environmental challenges

Challenges to maintaining healthy fish stocks and reliable access to them regularly arise and evolve over time. Identifying and meeting the challenges—before they become crises—is only possible through collaboration between fishermen, managers, and scientists.

Implementation Highlights

Investigate alternative management approaches to evaluate suitability for improved recreational fisheries management, specifically including fishing mortality rate methods • **Status: Substantial Progress**

In addition to revising the National Standard 1 guidelines, which provided fishery managers with additional flexibility to address concerns of the recreational fishing community, NOAA Fisheries provided federal grant support for and participated in the 2016 Alternative Management for Recreational Fisheries Workshop hosted by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and the American Sportfishing Association. The agency also participated in the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative, and supported formulation of a special Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel in the Gulf of Mexico to help develop lasting solutions to ongoing management challenges.

Develop Marine Recreational Information Program certified methods for electronic trip reporting in “for-hire” fisheries through pilot projects • **Status: Substantial Progress**

In partnership with for-hire vessel operators, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, and the Gulf Fisheries Information Network, NOAA Fisheries expects to certify jointly developed electronic for-hire reporting projects in late 2017. Partners completing projects leading to MRIP certification include Alaska Department of Fish and Game, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Pursue electronic reporting through implementation of regionally-based electronic-monitoring and reporting plans.
- Develop and implement a Bio-economic Length Structured Angler Simulation Tool to assess the effects of management actions on angler participation in West Coast recreational fisheries.
- Execute an economic study of Atlantic Highly Migratory Species fishing tournaments to improve understanding of their economic impacts and for consideration in management.

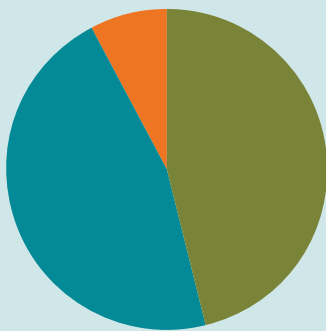
Provide scientifically sound and trusted social, cultural, economic, and biological information

Scientifically sound, trusted information from many disciplines is essential for effective management of natural resources. From routine economic expenditure surveys, to daily dockside catch surveys, NOAA Fisheries and our partners have developed some of the most advanced data collection systems in the world to support recreational fishing.



Guiding Principle 6 Project Status

Communicate and engage with the recreational fishing public



- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Substantial/Tangible Progress
- Initiated

Implementation Highlights

Initiate a National Research Academies of Science (NAS) review of the Marine Recreational Information Program to evaluate current recreational fisheries catch and effort data • Status: Completed

The NAS released a comprehensive review of the MRIP program in January 2017. The review found that NOAA Fisheries made “major improvements to the statistical soundness of survey designs” and “impressive progress in providing more reliable catch data to fishery managers.” NOAA Fisheries will finalize a strategic framework to address the NAS’ recommendations for additional improvements in the near future.

Execute a fishing trip expenditure survey in all coastal states to refine understanding of socioeconomic impacts of saltwater recreational fishing • Status: Substantial Progress

NOAA Fisheries completed expenditure surveys in the Gulf states and along the Pacific Coast in 2016 and is conducting those surveys from Maine to Georgia and in Hawaii in 2017. The data will be used to estimate expenditures and economic impacts associated with saltwater recreational fishing trips, ultimately providing important information about the societal impacts of saltwater recreational fishing in the United States.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Execute an economic study of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) fishing tournaments to improve understanding of their economic impacts and for consideration in management.
- Execute directed projects to improve recreational catch and effort data for pulse and other rare event fisheries, including Gulf of Mexico red snapper and Atlantic HMS.
- Complete and distribute the Main Hawaiian component of the National Angler Attitudes and Perspectives Survey.

Communicate and engage with the recreational fishing public

NOAA Fisheries understands that the best path to improving management of our coastal and ocean resources is to foster a well-informed and engaged fishing public.

Implementation Highlights

Work with stakeholders to host roundtable discussions in each region to strengthen relationships and share information • Status: Completed

NOAA Fisheries hosted nine regional recreational fisheries–focused dialogues in late 2016 and early 2017. We worked with fishermen to identify discussion topics, and the meetings expanded our network of engaged anglers, reinforced communications pathways, and identified region-specific challenges.

Partner with fishery management councils, and states to create recreational fishing data communications teams in each region • Status: Substantial Progress

NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is creating external communications working groups in NOAA Fisheries’ Greater Atlantic and Southeast regions. Representatives from the councils, Fisheries Information Networks (representing state partners), and Sea Grant will join NOAA Fisheries’ staff to improve the two-way flow of information.



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Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Provide relevant information efficiently and on a regular basis.
- Use the full suite of available tools to provide opportunities for all who wish to engage.
- Test and implement mobile platforms as a way to communicate fishery regulations.

On the Horizon

NOAA Fisheries is proud of our work to date following through on commitments made in the 2015 Recreational Fisheries Policy Implementation Plan. This progress was only possible through collaboration with anglers, the states, commissions, and councils.

While much has been accomplished and is underway, additional work remains. As we continue to execute the Implementation Plan in 2017 and 2018, we are already looking ahead.

Based upon constituent feedback and information provided during the 2017 Regional Recreational Fisheries Roundtables, NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will convene a National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit in spring 2018. This event will focus on identifying solutions to challenges identified by the saltwater recreational fishing community.

We look forward to our continued work with all of our partners to collectively improve our nation's saltwater recreational fisheries.

For more detailed information on the NOAA Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Initiative, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational/>

