



# National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy DISCUSSION GUIDE



NOAA Fisheries is developing an Agency-wide saltwater recreational fishing policy which outlines a set of principles to guide our actions and decisions over the long term. We would like your thoughts on what should be included in the new policy.

## POLICY PURPOSE

A national policy, which articulates a clear statement about core operating principles, could provide:

- A platform for a common understanding of agency perspectives.
- Guidance for agency activities, interactions, and management pertaining to our nation's saltwater recreational and non-commercial fisheries.

## POLICY SCOPE

The term "recreational fishing" means different things to different people. These different definitions may encompass a range of activities and many segments of the fishing community such as:

- Shore and private/non-for-hire vessels.
- For-hire vessels (e.g., charter, headboats, guides, and lodges).
- Recreational fishing industries (e.g., bait and tackle manufacturers and distributors, tournaments).
- Non-commercial fishermen.
- Expense fishing.
- Subsistence fishing.

## Discussion Questions:

1. How do you define recreational fisheries?
2. What activities do you think constitute recreational fisheries?
3. What might be the effect of defining recreational fisheries in this way in the national policy?

## POSSIBLE POLICY GOALS - OVERVIEW

Below are four draft policy goals for consideration. They are informed by NOAA Fisheries' own practices and input from many in the recreational/non-commercial fishing communities. They are intended to limit neither discussion nor consideration of other potential policy goals. The four possible goals are:

1. Foster and enhance sustainable, diverse, and high quality recreational/non-commercial fisheries and public access to them.
2. Integrate saltwater recreational/non-commercial considerations throughout NOAA and the federal marine fisheries management system.
3. Encourage partnership, engagement, and innovation.
4. Enhance transparency, follow-through, and continuity of action.

## Discussion Question:

1. Are these goals appropriate for a national policy?
2. Are there others which should be considered?

## POSSIBLE POLICY GOALS - IN DETAIL

In creating the new policy, we want to both build on what has already been learned through our ongoing conversations with constituents and provide the opportunity for the exchange of new ideas. Each draft policy goal is presented below with some relevant questions to stimulate discussion.

**DRAFT GOAL #1: Foster and enhance sustainable, healthy, and diverse recreational/non-commercial fisheries and public access to them.**

Many factors influence the quantity and quality of fishing opportunities, including management decisions, resource health, available science, and social and economic considerations.

**1.a. Management**

While recreational fishery management tools (e.g., bag limits and seasons) often attract the most attention, the underlying management principles and approaches are worthy of consideration for how they affect the quality of a fishery.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What would you like us to know about this topic?
2. How should we incorporate these considerations into the policy principles?

Some ideas suggested to NOAA Fisheries include:

- Ensure equitable distribution of fishing opportunities to and within the saltwater recreational/non-commercial fishing community, including periodic review of catch allocations.
- Better understand and manage for angler satisfaction.
- Consideration of socio-economic information *during formulation* of management strategies and actions.
- Support management and accountability compatible with saltwater recreational fisheries.
- Expand fishing opportunities based on conservation advances (e.g., reduced release mortality).

**1.b. Resource Conservation and Enhancement**

NOAA is the federal agency responsible for the stewardship of our nation's living marine resources. Both NOAA and the fishing public make important contributions to the conservation of these natural resources, resources which form the basis of sustainable, enjoyable recreational fisheries.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What would you like us to know about this topic?
2. How should we incorporate these considerations into the policy principles?

Some suggestions shared with NOAA Fisheries include:

- Empower anglers as effective resource stewards and incentivize conservation (e.g., sharing of best practices to reduce release mortality).
- Support science-based conservation and restoration efforts that benefit recreational fish stocks and their habitats.
- Encourage aquaculture related projects (e.g., stock enhancement, culture of baitfish) to support conservation and management of recreational fisheries.
- Support habitat enhancement projects (e.g., artificial reefs) for conservation and management of recreational fisheries.

**DRAFT GOAL # 2: Integrate saltwater recreational/non-commercial considerations throughout NOAA and the federal marine fisheries management system.**

Process, planning, and policy are fundamental to the efficient operation of organizations like NOAA and complex systems such as the federal fisheries management system.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **What would you like us to know about this topic?**
2. **How should we incorporate these considerations into the policy principles?**

Some suggestions shared with NOAA Fisheries include:

- Establish a full-time regional recreational coordinator in each NOAA Fisheries region and Atlantic HMS.
- Incorporate recreational fisheries considerations into the strategic plans of each region or office; or, develop recreational specific plans in each region or office.
- Support equitable representation on federal fishery management councils to ensure appropriate consideration of recreational fisheries issues.
- Support exploration of additional opportunities for co-management with states for recreational fisheries within both EEZ and state waters.

**DRAFT GOAL # 3: Encourage Partnership, Engagement and Innovation**

Wise stewardship of our living marine resources is a responsibility shared between our science and management partners (i.e., the states, commissions, and councils) and the fishing public. NOAA Fisheries understands that an engaged and informed public can improve science and decision-making.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **What would you like us to know about this topic?**
2. **How should we incorporate these considerations into the policy principles?**

Some suggestions shared with NOAA Fisheries include:

- Cooperative scientific research and analysis in partnership with fishermen and management partners.
- Collection of social and economic data in partnership with fishermen and management partners.
- Partnership on conservation and enhancement projects (e.g., habitat restoration) to further fishery management goals.
- Consistent two-way communication.

**DRAFT GOAL # 4: Enhance transparency, follow-through, and continuity of action.**

Public confidence is strengthened when there is a clear understanding of how and why decisions are made and stated objectives are achieved. Predictability is enhanced by maintaining a steady organizational approach to governance.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **What would you like us to know about this topic?**
2. **How should we incorporate these considerations into the policy principles?**

Some suggestions shared with NOAA Fisheries include:

- Regular communication on the status of rulemakings and science.
- Periodic updates on the status of agency commitments.
- Long-term funding of recreational programs.

**What have we missed?**

Are there any ideas you have for themes or policy issues that we have not included? If so, please let us know. You can also submit comments online at [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational).