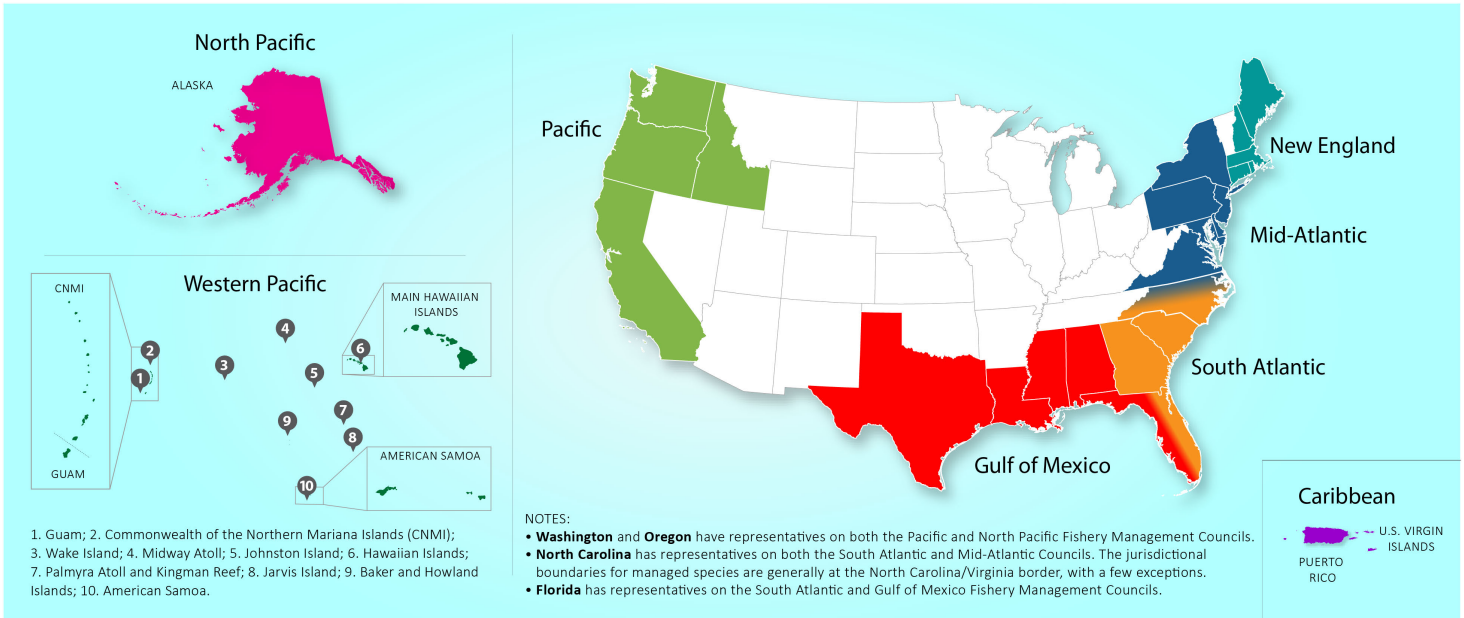




# U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils

CONSERVING AND MANAGING THE FISHERIES OF THE UNITED STATES

The **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)** is the main law that governs fishing in U.S. federal waters, ranging from 3 to 200 miles offshore. First passed in 1976, the MSA established a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and created eight regional fishery management councils to manage our nation’s marine fishery resources. This unprecedented management system gives fishery managers the flexibility to use local level input to develop management strategies appropriate for each region’s unique fisheries, challenges, and opportunities.



## What do the Councils do?

- **Develop and amend fishery management plans** for approval/implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce
- **Set annual catch limits and accountability measures** based on the best available science
- **Develop research priorities** with scientists and stakeholder/industry partners
- **Adhere to MSA’s mandate and 10 National Standards;** prevent overfishing; balance resource conservation with achieving optimum yield for domestic fisheries

## Who serves on the Councils?

- Councils have two types of **Voting Members**:
  - **Appointed Members** are private citizens who are knowledgeable about the region’s fisheries, such as commercial and recreational fishermen, industry leaders, environmentalists, academics, and tribal representatives. These individuals are nominated by each state’s Governor and appointed by the Secretary of Commerce for three-year terms.
  - **Designated State/Federal Members** include marine fishery management officials from each state and the NMFS regional administrator.
- **Non-Voting Members** include representatives from the Coast Guard, State Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Interstate Commissions.

## How do the Councils operate?

- Management of federal fisheries is done through a **public, transparent process**.
- Stakeholders have opportunities for involvement during all stages of decision-making.
- Councils receive input from advisory bodies, Council committees, plan development teams, Scientific and Statistical Committees, and the general public.
- Council decisions are based on best available science that is peer reviewed in public meetings, which allows fishermen to monitor stock assessments. Fishermen also participate in cooperative research projects with scientists.

## NORTH PACIFIC

**Fisheries:** Manages six fishery management plans (FMPs) covering 140+ species within 47 stocks and stock complexes, including pollock, cod, rockfish, crab, scallops, halibut, and state-managed salmon fisheries.

Over half of all seafood caught in the U.S. is from Alaska. Fishing-related industries in the area employ more people than any other private sector.  
[www.npfmc.org](http://www.npfmc.org)

## NEW ENGLAND

**Fisheries:** Manages 29 species under nine FMPs, including sea scallops, groundfish, Atlantic herring, skates, monkfish, whiting, and red crab. Habitat/coral protection across all plans. Working on ecosystem-based fishery management.

Major fishing ports include New Bedford, MA, the U.S.'s highest grossing port, and Gloucester, MA, the oldest fishing port in the nation.  
[www.nefmc.org](http://www.nefmc.org)

## MID-ATLANTIC

**Fisheries:** Manages 14 species under seven FMPs, including summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, surfclams, ocean quahogs, squid, mackerel, butterfish, tilefish, and dogfish.

Implemented an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management that protects habitat and forage fish across all FMPs. Established a 38,000 square mile deep sea coral protection zone.  
[www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)

## SOUTH ATLANTIC

**Fisheries:** Manages 75 species, including snapper grouper, mahi mahi, wahoo, mackerels, cobia, spiny lobster, corals, and shrimp. National leader in protecting habitat and ecosystem-based management.

Council managed fisheries contribute greatly to the approximate 78,000 jobs and \$7.7 billion in business sales supported by fishing activity in the South Atlantic region.  
[www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)



Councils manage fisheries within the U.S. EEZ (dark blue waters in the map above), which covers approximately 3.4 million square nautical miles of ocean.

## QUICK FACTS

**9.7 billion** – total pounds of commercial fishing *landings* in the U.S. in 2015

**8.9 million** – number of saltwater *recreational anglers* in the U.S. in 2015

**60.9 million** – saltwater *recreational fishing trips* in 2015

**1.6 million** – *jobs supported* by commercial and recreational saltwater fishing in 2015

**\$207.6 billion** – combined *sales impacts* from saltwater recreational and commercial fishing in 2015

**46** – number of *fishery management plans* providing a framework for managing the harvest of 473 fish stocks and stock complexes

Source: NMFS Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2015

## WESTERN PACIFIC

**Fisheries:** Manages thousands of species under five fishery ecosystem plans.

With waters comprising half the U.S. EEZ, the Western Pacific Region provides 80% of the nation's fresh domestic bigeye tuna and half of its yellowfin tuna and swordfish. Honolulu is one of the top 10 U.S. fishing ports in value landed. The fishing sector accounts for 52% of American Samoa's GDP.  
[www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org)

## PACIFIC

**Fisheries:** Manages 119+ species under four FMPs, including over 90 species of groundfish, albacore tuna, swordfish, sardines, squid, and Pacific halibut. Manages salmon that migrate from freshwater to ocean and back.

Fishery Ecosystem Plan proactively protects forage species and monitors environmental indicators. Essential Fish Habitat protection for ocean/river.  
[www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org)

## GULF OF MEXICO

**Fisheries:** Manages 42 species, including American red snapper, groupers, mackerels, reef fish, spiny lobster, and shrimp stocks that support the largest shrimp industry in the U.S. Addresses essential fish habitat across seven FMPs and offshore aquaculture.

Hosts the largest number of recreational fishing trips in the nation.  
[www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org)

## CARIBBEAN

**Fisheries:** Manages 300+ species under four FMPs, including spiny lobster, queen conch, groupers, snappers, parrotfish, surgeon fish, trigger fish, wrasses, and angelfish. Habitat protection for coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, and estuaries.

Developing island-based fishery management plans that account for geographical and cultural differences.  
[www.caribbeanfmc.com](http://www.caribbeanfmc.com)