

Subject: NOAA's Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy: Review & Comment Opportunity

From: Russell Dunn - NOAA Federal <russell.dunn@noaa.gov>

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Dear Council Chairs and Executive Directors:

Saltwater recreational fishing is a traditional American pastime integral to social, cultural, and economic life in coastal communities across the nation. This time-honored activity allows millions to access America's great outdoors each year, while generating billions of dollars in economic activity. The [National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy](#) is essential to shaping NOAA Fisheries' approach to recreational fishermen and their fisheries.

NOAA recognizes the need to adapt with a changing climate and the evolving needs of recreational fisheries and anglers. With the perspectives shared during the [2022 National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit](#), NOAA Fisheries requests your input on revising the Policy during the public comment period of August 1 - December 31, 2022. Please [visit this website to provide](#) feedback on any changes or updates you would like to see to the Policy. The website will also show dates for public meetings and webinars when they are confirmed.

The Policy serves as a platform to help the public understand NOAA Fisheries' perspectives and approaches to recreational fisheries issues. Developed with extensive public input, the 2015 Policy reflects the priorities of the day. Its goals and principles help guide Agency deliberations with regard to supporting and maintaining high quality sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries.

"Recreational anglers are one of NOAA Fisheries key constituencies", said Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Janet Coit. "I am eager for input from our partners and the public to help us shape how NOAA Fisheries advances sustainable recreational fishing opportunities at a time when ocean uses and ecosystems are changing rapidly."

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Russ Dunn.

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NOAA Fisheries Invites Comments to Update Recreational Fisheries Policy

August 01, 2022

Comments will be accepted online through December 31, 2022, as well as during webinars and in-person meetings.

To better serve saltwater recreational anglers and our coastal communities, NOAA Fisheries is asking for your guidance in revising our 2015 [National Policy for Saltwater Recreational Fisheries](#).

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To assist with this request, we suggest reviewing [the existing policy](#) and consider the following:

2015 Policy Statement

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.

Question: How might the 2015 policy statement be amended to better frame NOAA Fisheries' approach to recreational fisheries?

Scope of the 2015 Policy

The policy pertains to non-commercial activities of fishermen who fish for sport or pleasure, as set out in the Magnuson-Stevens Act definition of recreational fishing. That could be retaining (e.g., consuming, sharing) or releasing their catches, as well as the businesses and industries (e.g., the for-hire fleets, bait and tackle businesses, tournaments) which support them.

Question: How might the scope of the 2015 policy be amended to include appropriate participants and activities?

2015 Policy Goals

1. Support and maintain sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries resources, including healthy marine and estuarine habitats
2. Promote saltwater recreational fishing for the social, cultural, and economic benefit of the nation
3. Enable enduring participation in, and enjoyment of, saltwater recreational fisheries through science-based conservation and management

Question: How might the 2015 Policy goals be added to, narrowed, or amended to better inform the Agency's focus for recreational fisheries?

Guiding Principles of the 2015 Policy

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

Questions: How might the guiding principles of the Policy, including implementation strategies, be added to, narrowed, or amended to better guide Agency objectives and actions?

Additional Questions

- Are there concepts either missing or that should be considered for removal from the 2015 policy that are not captured in your comments up to this point (e.g., climate change)?
- What other suggestions do you have, if any, for NOAA to consider as we revise the 2015 Policy?

[Submit comments](#) 

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did NOAA Fisheries establish a Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy?

In February 2014, the non-governmental Morris-Deal Commission published a report highlighting a series of concepts to improve stewardship of saltwater recreational fisheries, including formulation of a national policy. At the conclusion of the 2014 Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit, NOAA Fisheries announced its intent to transparently develop a recreational fisheries policy statement, which was released in February 2015. We continue to recognize the value of a strong framework to guide and incorporate recreational fisheries into our daily activities.

What does the Policy do and how is it used?

The Policy provides NOAA Fisheries with a set of goals specifically pertaining to recreational fisheries within NOAA's overall mission. It also establishes a set of principles by which to operate as NOAA Fisheries works to achieve those goals. It is used to help guide Agency planning and decision making.

Why is NOAA Fisheries updating the Policy?

Following the 2022 Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit, NOAA Fisheries identified gaps in the Policy. NOAA Fisheries is updating the Policy to ensure that it adapts with changing ocean and fishery conditions, scientific understanding, and the evolving needs of the fishing public.

What is the public comment period for updating the Policy?

The public comment period is open August 1–December 31, 2022.

How can the public comment on the Policy?

There are multiple ways for the public to provide comments on any aspect of the Policy.

Comments will be accepted via an [online comment portal](#) , during webinars, and during in-person discussions. In person discussions are expected to include federal fishery management council meetings, marine fisheries commission meetings, and others. NOAA Fisheries will post the dates and times for these discussions as far in advance as they are known.

Does the Policy supersede the Magnuson-Stevens Act Fisheries Conservation and Management Act or other federal statutes?

No. The Policy is an expression of the Agency's goals within the framework of NOAA's larger mission and responsibilities, as established by the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other relevant legislation.

Last updated by [Office of Communications](#) on August 02, 2022