

Conservationist and the National Fisheries Plan

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Historically the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and subsequently the National Marine Fisheries Service have functioned predominantly as a biological and research arm of the commercial fisheries industries of the United States. Fundamental contributing factors can be generalized in two large categories: (1) those characteristics of the commercial fisheries industry and the relationship and function of national government in the development and support of industry, (2) and those inherent characteristics of sportfishing which mitigated (constituency) organizational efforts as well as the tardy appreciation of the economic costs of insufficient conservation practices. A detrimental quality shared by both groups of factors can be described in terms of their short-sightedness and preoccupation with immediate needs.

With these thoughts in mind, the National Fisheries Plan can be viewed as a rational attempt to solve those fundamental difficulties in certain specific categories. Remarks with particular reference to present and long term needs of recreational fisheries will be made concerned with: (1) the organization of fisheries management (uniform state laws, state-federal relationships, regional organizations); (2) international fisheries (present organizations—ICCAT, ITTAC and IGNAF, future of a global fisheries management organization); (3) recreational fisheries science and management practices (stock analysis); (4) management techniques; (5) catch allocation; (6) local and regional marine councils; (7) recreational fisheries representation in coastal zone management decisions; (8) implementation and application of recreational fisheries concerns under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Water Resources Planning Act; (9) federal and state responsibility for constituency development and participation.

It is obvious that increased activity on both the state and federal levels will be necessary to achieve effective management of coastal fisheries resources. State-federal cooperative plans should be implemented for fisheries according to the philosophy already employed by the Coastal Zone Management Act and others whereby the states are afforded the opportunity to meet certain minimal standards under the assurance that if the state does not adequately respond the federal government will assume that function. Uniform and cooperative fisheries legislation and enforcement is long overdue and will inhibit and prevent satisfactory development of any rational plan.