

Outline for a Southeastern Region Recreational Fishery Program Development Plan

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In 1973 the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere recommended development of a National Plan for Marine Fisheries of the United States and suggested that it be done by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Plan subsequently was developed, and by 1975 a draft had been reviewed by more than 3,000 commercial and recreational fishermen in public and private meetings, state and federal fishery administrators, officers and directors of fishing organizations, representatives of environmental and recreational groups, and scientists from academic and agency organizations. The Plan proposed specific recommendations to move fishery agencies toward achievement by 1985 of broad goals related to the national interest in marine fisheries and provides guidelines for developing national and regional recreational fishery Program Development Plans (PDP).

A large and increasing number of people depend on marine fisheries for relaxation and pleasure. The livelihood of many others depends on the business and jobs generated by recreational fishermen. Therefore, any national or regional plan for fisheries must include plans for development, enhancement, and protection of marine recreational fisheries. This PDP attempts to broadly identify program areas necessary to support fisheries management in the Southeast Region and thereby allow state agencies and other constituents to relate to the proposed NMFS regional recreational fisheries program.

A 1974 NMFS contract survey estimated that about 5.7 million residents of New York and the New England states participated in marine recreational fishing and shellfishing during the 12 months ending June 1974. Since these states contain about 18% of the saltwater anglers in the U.S., the nationwide total is probably over 30 million marine recreational fishermen.

A NMFS survey estimated that over nine million saltwater anglers¹ harvested nearly 1,600 million pounds of edible finfish in 1970. This recreational harvest was about equivalent to U.S. commercial landings of edible finfish the same year. The 1970 recreational catch, if sold as commercial landings, would have been about \$244 million (ex-vessel price paid to fishermen). The ex-vessel value of domestic commercial landings of edible finfish was about \$242 million in 1970.

¹This estimate was limited to those anglers (1) over 12 years of age, (2) who spend more than 3 days or \$7.50 pursuing the sport, (3) only those fishing for finfish, while the 1974 contract survey cited in paragraph 2 above included fishermen of all ages, anyone who went fishing one or more times and those who fished for shellfish.

Marine fishing also has a significant recreational value. During 1970 saltwater anglers spent an estimated \$1,225 million while participating in marine recreational fishing activities, an amount almost 5 times the ex-vessel value of their catch. These expenditures by recreational fishermen have a large economic impact on coastal areas. For example, during 12 months ending October 1973, commercial saltwater recreational vessels, e.g. charter and party boats, received over \$85 million in gross revenues from recreational fishermen. Although this is only a small fraction of the expenditures for marine recreational fishing, the income these boat operators received is equivalent in value to the fourth most valuable commercial fishery in the U.S.

The preceding statements documenting the significance of the marine recreational fisheries were based upon data collected during the few specialized surveys, e.g., 1960 and 1970 saltwater anglers survey, and special contract surveys, which have been conducted at infrequent, or irregular, intervals. Much of the information on marine recreational fisheries, e.g., number of participants, impact on resources, support in industries and attendant socio-economic factors, remains undocumented and is presently not available when legislation affecting fisheries is being considered.

The Department of Commerce vigorously sought responsibility and authority for marine recreational fishery activities in the 1970 Executive Reorganization. This authority was obtained, and NOAA accepted responsibility for implementing the Migratory Marine Game Fish Study Act of 1959. This Act authorized the development of conservation and constructive management policies for migratory fish of interest to recreational fishermen. NOAA was also assigned responsibility, under the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, to provide education and extension services relative to commercial and sport fisheries and generally to promote the wise use of the nation's marine fishery resources.

The lack of a coordinated national marine recreational fishery management program based on biological research and economic and social surveys has restricted NMFS involvement in recreational fisheries. The National Marine Fisheries Service should manage the nation's fishery resources for optimum benefits to the nation and give consideration to recreational and commercial fisheries in relation to their impact on fish stocks, the national economy and social structure. The principal role of NMFS in marine recreational fisheries must be to carry out and support effective management in cooperation with the states and other resource users. Management decisions to optimize the benefits from this nation's marine fishery resources must be based on facts pertaining to each resource and its users.

The regional, state-federal recreational fishery plan should provide a clear definition of roles and responsibilities required for the effective working relationships between and among states and the NMFS. Since most recreationally important fishes are found within state waters, each state should manage the fisheries occurring within its three-mile sea, with assistance or coordination from NMFS when two or more states participate in the same fishery. Federal involvement within the territorial sea should be primarily in the form of cooperative state-federal research and management programs. NMFS should be the lead

management agency where international stocks are involved. The nature of these state-federal relationships is expected to vary regionally according to the needs and interests of the states involved. The role of the NMFS Marine Recreational Fishery Program in offshore waters will be determined by the actual management authority delegated to NOAA/NMFS, and the state-federal institutional structure adopted under extended jurisdiction.

The National Plan for Marine Fisheries presently being refined broadly defines the issues requiring action in this nation's fisheries. The scope and magnitude of marine recreational fisheries require that NOAA/NMFS provide a program framework (PDP) within which national and regionally-oriented activities can be focused. In decisions concerning the nation's marine resources, marine recreational fishing cannot be given full consideration unless information on catch, effort, stock size, and relative species importance is available.

Management of marine fisheries requires the availability of adequate information concerning both commercial and recreational uses of the stocks involved. Catch and effort data generally have been available for most commercial fisheries, but not for recreational fisheries. Commercial catches are landed by a limited number of vessels at specific ports, and are sold to a limited number of buyers. Recreational fishery catches are landed by large numbers of unlicensed individuals at numerous and widely dispersed landing sites, and hence go unreported, except in some cases when recreational anglers sell all or parts of their catch. Therefore, to monitor catch, effort and economics of marine recreational fisheries, specialized methods are required. Participation of the state agencies in developing and implementing recreational fishery programs is essential.

NOAA/NMFS must identify the information needed to develop national and regional marine recreational fisheries policies and must provide the framework to acquire this information. Regional recreational fishery PDP's will be used to form the national PDP.

Recreational fisheries in the NMFS Southeast Region have a larger number of participants, a greater variety of fishing methods, a greater species diversity, and a larger potential for future development than the recreational fisheries in any other region. They interact with foreign and domestic fisheries. Most species range along the Atlantic or Gulf Coasts of the region and must be considered throughout their range. Extensive shallow estuaries are the principal geographic characteristic of the Southeast Region and many of the recreational species are dependent upon estuarine habitat during all or part of their life span.

This PDP outlines a regional undertaking with state and federal participants to manage coastal marine fisheries of concern to the recreational fishermen.

Certain fundamental information about a fishery stock is required before any attempt is made to manage the resource. The PDP is arranged in a logical sequence to obtain this information. Complete information is not required for management recommendations but a determination, to some degree of the following, is mandatory: (1) Identity and distribution of stock, (2) Age or size composition and reproductive age, (3) Catch and effort statistics, (4) Current status of stock size, and (5) Economic and social values.

The National Plan for Marine Fisheries presently being refined defines the issues requiring action in this nation's fisheries. The scope and magnitude of marine recreational fisheries require that research and management agencies agree upon a program framework (PDP) with a goal and objectives within which national and regionally-oriented recreational fishery activities can be focused.

The following goals and objectives provide for full consideration of marine recreational uses of these resources in the Southeast Region.

GOALS:

Conserve and Allocate Marine Fishery Resources and Habitats and Increase Recreational Satisfaction Derived from These Resources

- Objective I A scientific data base for fishery management.
 - Program Area I A Obtain statistics on catch and effort of marine recreational fisheries.
 - I B Determine distribution, age or size composition, and age of maturity for each stock.
 - I C Determine the economic and social values of each stock.
 - I D Determine the status of stocks important to the recreational fisheries in the Southeast Region.
 - I E Determine habitat requirements for recreational fishes.
- Objective II Designation and allocation of fishery stocks and habitats needing management by State, Federal and International agreements.
 - Program Area II A Determine the fish stocks that should be managed.
 - II B Establish criteria for and determine optimum yield for each stock.
 - II C Allocate the stocks for optimum yield and utilization by domestic fishermen, both commercial and recreational.
 - II D Provide criteria for fish habitat protection and enhancement to land use planners and regulatory agencies.
- Objective III An informed recreational fishing constituency that participates in plans, programs and policies.
 - Program Area III A Establish a regional recreational fisheries coordinator.
 - III B Arrange State, Federal and Regional forums.
- Objective IV Regulation of fish stocks and habitats by State, Federal and International controls.
 - Program Area IV A Establish regulations for resource allocation and habitat protection.

- IV B Establish a permit and licensing system.
- IV C Implement regulations.
- IV D Measure and monitor the effects of regulations.
- Objective V Increase satisfaction derived from recreational fishery resources.
- Program Area V A Prepare and distribute information on identification and life history of target species.
- V B Prepare and disseminate information on distribution and habits of target species.
- V C Prepare and distribute information on use of target species.
- V D Determine needs for access and means of increasing access to recreational fisheries.
- V E Determine availability of access to recreational fisheries.
- V F Increase access facilities where needed.
- V G Determine the need for sanctuaries and preserves and, if needed, identify geographical areas.