National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy

At NOAA Fisheries, we love fish. We also agree with the roughly 11 million Americans who think wetting a line is a great way to spend time.

That's why we launched an initiative back in 2010 to improve our science and stewardship for saltwater fishermen everywhere. The effort is about better understanding fishermen's needs, better tailoring our programs, and empowering recreational fishermen to be effective stewards.

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Saltwater recreational fishing is woven into our nation's social and economic fabric. NOAA Fisheries, the federal agency responsible for the stewardship of our ocean and coastal resources, is asking for your help in developing a national policy on saltwater recreational fisheries. At the 2014 national Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit, NOAA Fisheries committed to develop an Agency-wide policy.

Why do we need a saltwater recreational fisheries policy?

For an organization the size of NOAA, process and policy are important. A clear statement about our operating principles does two things: 1) it institutionalizes our commitment to healthy recreational fisheries and the benefits they provide to the nation and 2) it provides guidance when difficult choices need to be made.

What is a policy exactly?

A national saltwater recreational fisheries policy outlines a set of principles to guide NOAA actions and decisions over the long-term. The policy will share basic tenets with the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), the legislation that governs fisheries management in federal waters. While the MSA outlines the legal requirements, this new policy will make clear the values we will keep in mind when implementing the law. Further, the policy will serve as the underpinning to the Agency's recreational fishing Action Agenda, which we update every 4 years.

How can I share an opinion?

This summer, you will have the opportunity to share your thoughts on what should be in NOAA Fisheries' saltwater recreational fisheries policy. There will be a number of ways to add your voice to the conversation:

- **In Person:** Join us in person at one of the public town hall meetings held in conjunction with an upcoming Regional Fishery Management Council meeting.
- **On the Phone:** Call in to one of the national informational webinars.
- **Online:** Share a comment online.

The full schedule, discussion questions, and details on how to share your thoughts can be found on our website at: **http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational/**