



## NOAA Fact Sheet

# Saltwater Recreational Fishing

Saltwater recreational fishing is one of the most popular outdoor sports in America, and those who take part in it bring economic vitality to coastal towns and cities. Saltwater anglers know and love the oceans and have a keen interest in sustaining fishing opportunities for their children and grandchildren. They are natural champions for ocean stewardship.

**Dr Jane Lubchenco**

Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

### An Important American Pastime

Each year, more than 12 million Americans enjoy saltwater recreational fishing. For many coastal communities, recreational fishermen are the lifeblood of the local economy, supporting not only bait, tackle and boat sales, but also restaurants, hotels and other businesses.

Saltwater recreational anglers spend approximately \$31 billion annually; representing \$82 billion in total economic impact and supporting half a million U.S. jobs.

NOAA, through its National Marine Fisheries Service, is the federal agency with the day-to-day responsibility of ensuring the long-term health of our oceans, fish stocks and all marine life. NOAA has jurisdiction over fishing regulations through the country, covering both recreational and commercial fisherman.

### The Future of Our Oceans

Recreational anglers, like commercial fishermen, have a vested interest in the health of the oceans and fish. Although the total number of fish caught by recreational anglers is small

compared to the commercial sector, for popular species such as mahi mahi, spotted seatrout and kelp bass, the proportion of recreational catch is comparable to and, in some cases, far outpaces the commercial harvest.

More than just a popular pastime and economic driver, saltwater recreational fishing is a contributor to conservation. By practicing catch and release techniques, advocating for better science, engaging in the policy process, and participating in NOAA data collection efforts, anglers serve as eyes and ears on the water and stewards of our marine resources.

Keeping our oceans healthy is too big a job for one agency or entity. NOAA must work closely with recreational fishermen, charter boat captains, coastal states and others in the angling community to ensure our ocean resources are sustainable and available for today and future generations of saltwater anglers.

### Long-Term Health of Fisheries

Traditionally, recreational fisheries have been managed on an annual basis through size and catch limits, fishing seasons, and the closure of certain areas.

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NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service works with the coastal states, eight regional fishery councils, and three interstate fisheries commissions to regularly review the health of hundreds of ocean fisheries.

They use this information to decide how many fish can be taken recreationally and commercially without negatively affecting the long term health of individual fisheries. They also ensure appropriate measures are taken to recover fisheries in trouble.

To guard against threats the oceans are facing today and into the future means working with all stakeholders, including recreational fishermen, through a transparent, science-based approach to fairly and equitably allocate access to this shared resource.

### Sustaining the Marine Ecosystems

The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is changing the way recreational fishing data are collected and reported to help ensure that managers, scientists, and anglers have the most complete and reliable information necessary to fairly and sustainably keep marine ecosystems healthy.



In 2009, NOAA invested more than \$1 million to fund research and pilot projects designed to improve the methodologies of data collection and analysis.

One improvement recreational anglers will see in 2010 is the *National Saltwater Angler Registry*. This “phone book” of recreational fishermen will provide a much more efficient and effective route for collecting anglers’ catch data.

Beginning in 2010, recreational anglers living in non-exempt states – those without a comprehensive saltwater fishing license or regional angler survey – will have to sign up with NOAA. There is no cost to register in 2010.

### Web Resources

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service  
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

Marine Recreational Information Program  
<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mrip/index.html>

Chart the Future – NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan <http://www.noaa.gov/ngsp>

To learn more about NOAA, visit  
<http://www.noaa.gov>.