



**Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan
Regional Constituent Workshop #4
Atlantic States Region – Tuckerton, New Jersey
June 2, 2004**

The fourth in the series of Regional Constituent Workshops supporting the development of the new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan for 2005-2009 was held at the Jacques Cousteau Coastal Education Center, Tuckerton, New Jersey on June 2nd for constituents in the Atlantic States Region. The regional workshops were designed to provide Recreational Fisheries constituents the opportunity to share their vision of an effective and successful Federal Recreational Fisheries Program, describe the characteristics and attributes of this Program, and discuss them in the context of a review of the draft NOAA Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan.

Michael Doble of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) welcomed the workshop participants and described his views on the potential positive impacts of emerging NOAA initiatives on Recreational Fisheries interests. Welcoming remarks were also provided by Rebecca Lent, NOAA Fisheries Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, who thanked the attendees for their time and discussed the critical value of participation by the constituents in the NOAA strategic planning process. Following introductory comments by the workshop team, the attendees participated in a facilitated session designed to elicit ideas from each individual, share these ideas and prioritize them through small group interaction, and then jointly develop an affinity diagram representing a collection of the key attributes and characteristics of the group. The following diagram represents the product of this exercise. After a plenary review, the current draft of the Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan was introduced and the attendees were afforded the opportunity to comment on the contrasts and similarities between their group product and the draft Strategic Plan.

Results of Affinity Diagramming Process: Characteristics and Attributes of the Future Federal Recreational Fisheries Program

Management Tools and Implementation	Ecosystem Management	Fair Economics	Data Collection	Resource Allocation	Habitat Protection	Communications	Management Systems
No Salt Water License	Management of Multiple Species (Not Individual Species)	Socio-Economic Recognition	Survey Data Needs to Agree with Field Observations	Represent All Recreational Fisheries Including Both Hook-and-Line and Sport Diver Fishermen	Habitat Protection (esp. Dredging and Pollution Impacts)	Communications from Top to Bottom	Develop Long-Term Goals - Stop Knee-Jerk Reactions
No Area Closures for Recreational Fishermen	Multi-Species Approach - Predator and Prey (e.g., Bunker-Bass; Weak)	Balance Conservation with Economic Impact	Better Data Collection for More Accurate Stock Assessment	Revise Allocation in Rebuilding Fisheries	Restrict Clam Boats - Keep Them Offshore	Use the Internet for Larger User Input	Management Decisions Based on Data
No-Fishing Zones		NMFS - Factor in Accurate Economic Impacts to Determine Fair Catch	Real Data from Real Science with Angler Involvement	Balance Recreational and Commercial Harvests	Restrict Commercial Fisheries from Artificial Reefs; Use Special Management Zones		NOAA, etc. Fully Discuss and Set Guidelines (Something Firmer); Scientific Basis
Marine Protected Areas			Trash MRFSS - Replace with a Better System				Accountability for Management Decisions
Eliminate High Grading by Establishing Poundage Limits			Real-Time Management and Data Collection				Provide Sustainable Fisheries
No New Taxes on Anglers (Use Existing Taxes on Anglers/Boaters)			Streamline Information and Data Collection to Implementation				
			More Funding for States to do Data Collection				
			Data Collection Needs to be More Accurate				
						Other	
						Constituents Need to Have Trust in the System	
						More Funding	

During the group's discussion of the draft Strategic Plan in the context of the affinity diagram, comments were shared on the clear emphasis on initiatives related to data collection. The workshop facilitators pointed out that data collection and credibility attributes have been a constantly recurring theme in prior workshops. A related suggestion was made to reduce self-imposed restrictions on collecting data at venues frequented by recreational anglers such as marinas and fuel piers. The attendees agreed that the attributes and characteristics related to management systems, tools, and implementation measures represented the most significant challenges to the government in its desire to transition to a new, more responsive management strategy. The need for sufficient numbers of trained, qualified people within NOAA to implement the proposed strategy was also viewed as a sizeable challenge.

The attendees shared their views on the need for attention to advisory issues such as those related to health, quality of fish for consumption, and dealing with the problems of development and pollution such as algae growth and fertilizer runoff. One of the members noted that proactive planning to mitigate the impacts of coastal commercial development and protect the watershed was necessary. It was believed that this sort of growth was inevitable due to the local need to accommodate a growing population. The group felt that non-fishing factors affecting the recreational fishing experience needed attention; the movement towards an ecosystem-based management approach was viewed as a positive step in this endeavor. Other areas of needed emphasis expressed by the attendees included international cooperative efforts for management of highly migratory species, standardization of guidelines and reduction of duplication in recreational tagging and observation measures, and appropriate resource allocation.

One observation that was shared within the context of a discussion on education and outreach related to the target audience for education programs. Constituents have concluded that most existing educational initiatives emphasize good conservation practices and target recreational anglers in an effort to increase their knowledge and their willingness to adopt these practices. There is a perceived lack of educational effort focused on the economic benefit and public good of recreational fishing that targets an audience of conservationists in an effort to increase sensitivities to the rights and cooperative best practices of the anglers.

The attendees were supportive of the use of emerging information technology to facilitate good communications between managers and constituents. The Northeast Region website and the *Fish News* were listed as good examples of communications media. The group also encouraged the use of electronic mail as an option for administrative necessities such as license renewals as a cost saving measure over traditional paper mail. Finally, the attendees agreed that their most important role in the process was to get the word out to a broader cross-section of anglers, educate them on the ongoing planning process, and encourage them to get involved and share their views.

In closing, Jim Donofrio, the Executive Director of the RFA, disclosed a personal observation of marked improvements in both the draft Strategic Plan and the NOAA process since his initial participation in a March meeting at the NOAA headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. He viewed with satisfaction the growing voice of Recreational Fisheries constituents within NOAA and shared his hope for continued progress by the government in protecting the rights of recreational anglers.