



NOAA
FISHERIES

Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Strategic Plan

2016-2020





Office of Sustainable Fisheries
Strategic Plan
2016 - 2020

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Office of Sustainable Fisheries**



**NOAA
FISHERIES**



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INTRODUCTION

U.S. fisheries are among the world's largest and most sustainable. The U.S. science-based fishery management process is designed to prevent overfishing and rebuild fish stocks, help strengthen the value of fisheries to the economy, our communities, and marine ecosystems, and provide a long-term supply of healthy seafood for the nation. A key component to any successful management system is the ability to establish and strengthen policies at a national level to guide consistent application of statutory requirements. Equally important is the ability to measure the effectiveness of such a system on a national basis and improve it over time. The Office of Sustainable Fisheries (OSF) serves this role, among others, within NOAA Fisheries relative to its fisheries management programs.

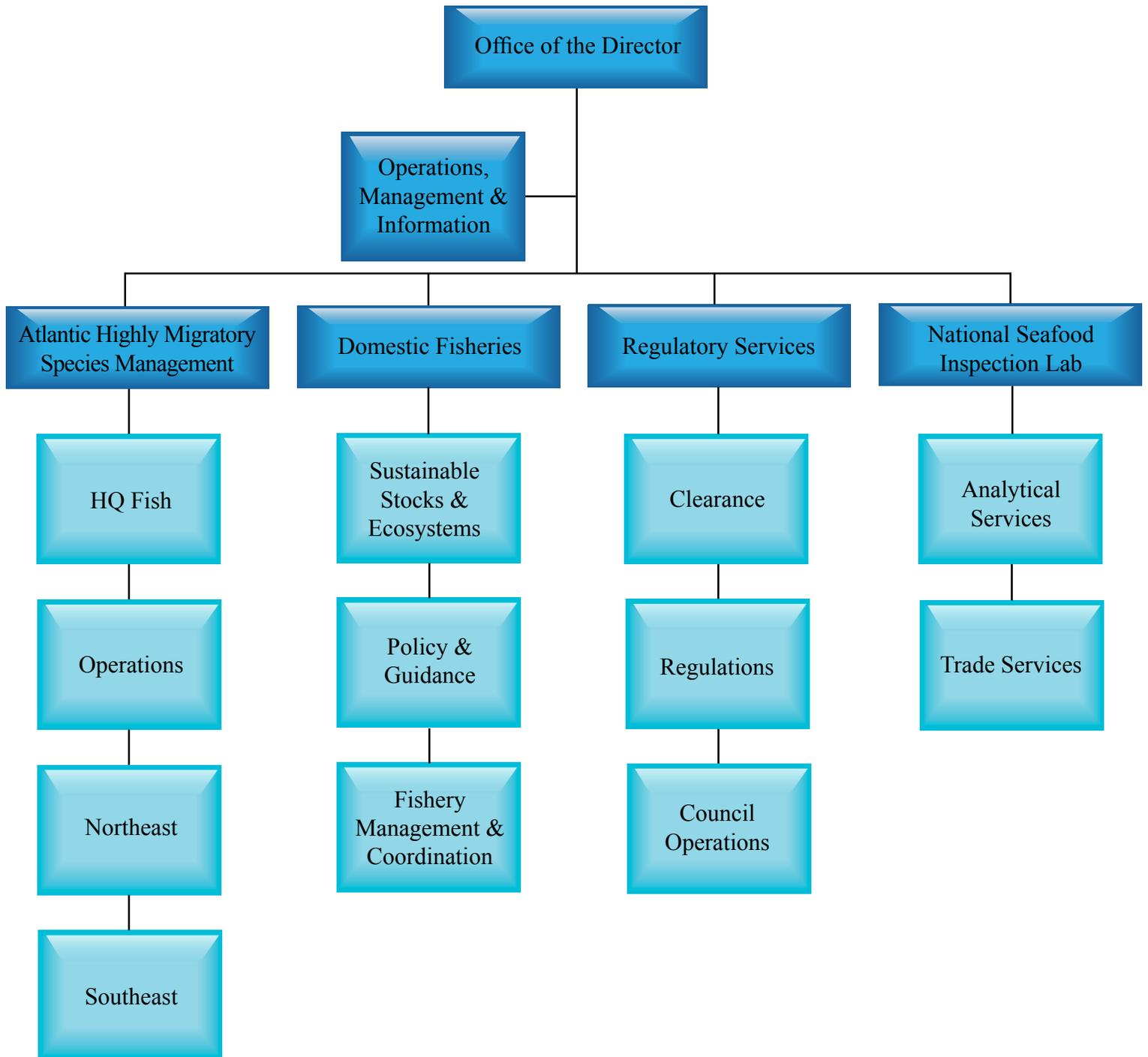
This strategic plan identifies goals, objectives, and specific strategies for the next five years (2016 to 2020) to guide OSF. It focuses on implementing, guiding, and achieving one of NOAA Fisheries' two core mandates—ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations. This plan also supports implementation of the Department of Commerce Strategic Plan, NOAA Annual Guidance Memorandum, and the NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance document (see Appendix). Finally, it serves as a guide for all OSF employees in executing their responsibilities within NOAA Fisheries, NOAA, and the Department of Commerce.

OFFICE OVERVIEW

OSF supports consideration and resolution of national domestic policy issues, provides support to the regional fishery management councils (councils), manages fisheries for Atlantic highly migratory species, and works with federal partners to ensure the safety of seafood sold in the U.S. OSF is a headquarters office, and works closely with the five NOAA Fisheries regional offices and six science centers and in partnership with the councils, interstate marine fishery commissions, and states to ensure U.S. fisheries are sustainably managed. OSF also engages the fishing industry (both commercial and recreational), seafood dealers, environmental groups, other federal agencies, and academia to ensure sustainable fisheries, sustainable economies, and healthy and nutritious shellfish and finfish.

OSF is one of seven national program offices and reports to the NOAA Fisheries Deputy Assistant Administrator of Regulatory Programs. It employs approximately 80 people (FTE's, contractors, fellows, etc.) primarily in Silver Spring, Maryland; Gloucester, Massachusetts; St. Petersburg, Florida; and Pascagoula, Mississippi. OSF is made up of a directorate, which includes office leadership and the Operations, Management, and Information (OMI) function, and four divisions: the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division, the Domestic Fisheries Division, the Regulatory Services Division, and the National Seafood Inspection Laboratory.

Sustainable Fisheries Organizational Chart



Office of the Director and Operations, Management, and Information

The Directorate is responsible for overall office leadership, communications, and all administrative functions for internal operations. Operations, Management, and Information (OMI) staff support operations through budget planning and execution; contract management; human resource management; oversight of administrative processes; management of information technology, and management of travel, safety, and property.

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division

The Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division manages fisheries for a number of fish species in U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico waters, as required by statute. Because these species cross domestic and international boundaries, the HMS Division is responsible for managing them under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act. These highly migratory species (HMS)—tunas, sharks, swordfish, and billfish—live throughout the Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, and often migrate long distances. Responsible management of Atlantic HMS requires international cooperation through a number of agreements including the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In consultation with an advisory panel, states, commissions, industry, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the division develops and implements fishery management actions for Atlantic HMS taking into account all domestic and international requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Atlantic Tunas Convention Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, among other laws. The division:

- Implements international agreements regarding Atlantic HMS stocks
- Develops rebuilding plans to rebuild overfished Atlantic HMS stocks
- Works to prevent overfishing of Atlantic HMS stocks
- Develops and implements regulations to ensure effective and sustainable management of Atlantic HMS stocks
- Works to reduce impacts to ESA-listed species
- Analyzes data and works with constituents to ensure management is appropriate
- Issues HMS permits and registers HMS tournaments

The division has branches co-located with the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic (Gloucester, MA) and Southeast Regional Offices (St. Petersburg, FL).

Pacific HMS species are managed by the NOAA Fisheries West Coast and Pacific Islands Regional Offices.

Domestic Fisheries Division

The Domestic Fisheries Division provides national policy direction and performance oversight to ensure the continued sustainable management of our nation's fisheries, primarily in federal waters. The division coordinates with NOAA Fisheries Headquarters offices, regional offices, science centers, and the councils on national policies and regulations to:

- Prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks
- Implement annual catch limits and accountability measures
- Determine and track fish stock status
- Reduce bycatch
- Coordinate on policies and regulations to implement catch share programs
- Provide fishery disaster assistance
- Support recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishing
- Provide guidance on economic and social analyses for regulatory and other actions

The division also conducts analysis on national legislation, and has a role in the annual budget planning, execution, and performance monitoring and reporting for national sustainable fisheries funding. The division partners with states and Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions on fisheries issues that cross federal and state boundaries.

Regulatory Services Division

The Regulatory Services Division provides a variety of services that facilitate the responsible management of our nation's living marine resources, including supporting the regulatory process and the councils. The division provides oversight and support to the councils by:

- Conducting the annual nomination and appointment process
- Providing annual training to new council members
- Facilitating periodic meetings of the Council Coordination Committee and resolving council operational issues

The division facilitates the development of regulations across NOAA Fisheries by reviewing and processing all documents that are published in the Federal Register and providing support to ensure that fisheries actions comply with all applicable guidance. The division also tracks the status and progress of rules and actions across the agency.

National Seafood Inspection Lab

The National Seafood Inspection Laboratory (NSIL), located in Pascagoula, Mississippi, is focused on two primary missions—promoting seafood product safety and quality and supporting seafood-related domestic commerce and international trade. NSIL has a broad range of expertise to support this mission, including:

- Analytical capabilities to ensure seafood product quality and safety
- Seafood forensics skills
- Seafood science, statistical, regulatory, and trade expertise
- Knowledge of seafood import and export programs

NSIL addresses a number of issues critical to making sure that U.S. seafood is safe for consumers—species substitution, the use of banned chemicals and antibiotics, seafood contamination assessments, and the science that supports U.S. guidance for seafood consumption. In addition, NSIL works cooperatively with federal and state agencies, international governments and organizations, and private industry on seafood safety and trade-related issues.



PARTNERS

To succeed in meeting its goals, OSF depends heavily on working with partners and engaging constituents and stakeholders. The Magnuson-Stevens Act created eight councils responsible for the conservation and management of fisheries in their respective regions. OSF directly supports the councils by conducting the annual member nomination and appointment process, and training new members. It facilitates regular meetings of the Council Coordination Committee, which meets to discuss issues relevant to all eight councils. The OSF Domestic Fisheries Division partners with three Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions—the Atlantic States, Gulf States, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commissions—to tackle fisheries and data collection issues that cross federal and state boundaries, and also collaborates with the state marine resources division directors. OSF’s HMS Division consults with and considers the comments of the HMS Advisory Panel, the councils, the commissions, and other constituents when preparing and implementing its Fishery Management Plan (FMP) or FMP amendments. Through these venues and directly, OSF engages with commercial and recreational fishing constituents, fishing communities, environmental groups, the seafood processing industry, and the general public.

OSF also has a number of important partners within NOAA Fisheries, NOAA, and other government agencies. We work closely with the five regional offices and six fisheries science centers on a variety of issues related to fisheries policy and management actions. We rely specifically on the Northeast and Southeast Fisheries Science Centers to provide scientific information on Atlantic HMS fisheries. We work closely with the Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection on international negotiations, trade reporting, and other international fisheries management issues, and provide analytical services and technical expertise in supporting their seafood inspection program. We also work closely with the DOC and NOAA Office of General Counsel to manage regulatory data flow and to interpret statutory and regulatory text both during development and implementation. OSF works to strengthen NOAA Fisheries’ partnership with the saltwater recreational fishing community through staff and other support to the Recreational Fisheries Initiative. The office coordinates with the other national program offices – Protected Resources, Habitat Conservation, Science and Technology, Law Enforcement, Aquaculture, Communications, and Management and Budget – on a variety of cross-cutting programs and issues, including bycatch reduction, essential fish habitat, and budget development.

For more information about OSF’s many programs and activities, visit us online.



NOAA FISHERIES
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES
www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sfa

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Two overarching goals guide our work—sustainable and resilient fisheries and fishing communities and organizational excellence. As a goal, “sustainable and resilient fisheries and fishing communities” is a mission-oriented goal that means ensuring that fish stocks are maintained or rebuilt to levels that meet the Magnuson-Stevens Act’s charge to “realize the full potential of the Nation’s fishery resources” and all actions taken are consistent with the Act’s 10 National Standards. It also means ensuring that seafood products are safe to eat and consumers are protected from fraudulent products. Meeting this goal ensures that the Nation’s valuable fish stocks and the various components of the fishing industry – commercial, recreational, subsistence, tribal – and the communities they support are sustainable over the long-term. Thus, OSF shares the responsibilities under this goal with the NOAA Fisheries regional offices and science centers, councils, and states and works in close collaboration with them to achieve it. Regional office and science center strategic plans, goals, objectives, strategies, and activities relative to sustainable fisheries therefore contribute to and directly support this goal.

“Organizational excellence” is an operational goal that means ensuring that the OSF workforce is well informed of current agency policies, requirements, activities, and procedures; is properly trained for their current and future responsibilities and careers; and that available resources are adequate to conduct their work in an effective manner. The organizational excellence goal focuses inward and ensures OSF will remain a highly productive organization and its employees are able to contribute fully to its goals and those of NOAA Fisheries.

For each of these goals, we identified several objectives that describe the outcomes or management impact we are trying to achieve. This plan supports the priorities and goals in the NOAA Fisheries, NOAA, and Department of Commerce strategic planning documents (see Appendix). The goals, objectives, and strategies articulated here will guide the development and execution of the NOAA Fisheries Annual Operating Plan.



Goals

Sustainable and Resilient Fisheries and Fishing Communities

Operational Excellence

Objectives

- **National Policy, Guidance, and Regulatory Support:** Develop and strengthen national policy, guidance, and regulatory support services to improve sustainability of fish stocks, fisheries, and fishing communities.
- **Ecosystem Management Approaches:** Advance and strengthen use of ecosystem approaches to fisheries management to improve sustainability of fish stocks, fisheries, and fishing communities.
- **Fishery Performance Monitoring:** Improve fishery performance monitoring and documentation of fisheries sustainability.
- **Sustainability of Atlantic HMS Fisheries:** Improve sustainability of Atlantic Highly Migratory Species fishery resources through an adaptive, responsive, and transparent fisheries management process.
- **Seafood Consumer Confidence:** Improve consumer confidence in U.S. fishery products by helping to ensure their safety and advancing methods to address seafood fraud in support of effective domestic and international management of fishery resources.
- **Effective Partnerships:** Develop and strengthen effective partnerships with regional fishery management councils, advisory panels, Interstate Fisheries Management Commissions, states, Regional Fishery Management Organizations, constituents, and other partners to achieve sustainable fisheries.
- **Communications and Outreach:** Improve communication of OSF products and activities to external audiences using cost-effective communication tools, consultations, and outreach activities.
- **Strategic Planning and Fiscal Accountability:** Improve OSF's strategic position to maintain resources, and ensure fiscal accountability and effective internal controls.
- **Workforce Investment:** Improve use of training, and succession, retention, and recruitment strategies that support employee growth and career development to ensure a proficient and effective workforce.
- **Internal OSF Communications:** Strengthen internal communications within and across OSF divisions and with OSF leadership.

STRATEGIES

For each goal and related objective, we identified a number of strategies that describe specifically how we plan to achieve that objective. The specific activities and actions supporting these strategies will be included in the NOAA Fisheries and OSF annual operating plans, divisional work plans, and employee performance plans.



Goal: Sustainable and Resilient Fisheries and Fishing Communities

National Policy, Guidance, and Regulatory Support

Develop and strengthen national policy, guidance and regulatory support services to improve sustainability of fish stocks, fisheries, and fishing communities.

1. Identify and engage in national policy, science, and socioeconomic issues affecting sustainable fisheries management.
2. Improve federal fisheries management through legislative initiatives, revised national regulations and guidance, and training aimed at improving ecological, social, and economic performance of fisheries and fishing communities.
3. Provide impact analyses of new statutes and proposed changes to existing statutes.
4. Provide leadership across regions to help ensure catch share programs are implemented and executed consistently.
5. Provide guidance and support on disaster declarations and assistance.
6. Increase use of regulatory tracking system to ensure regulations are prepared and submitted in accordance with current NOAA Fisheries guidance and requirements outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law, and better manage regulatory data flow with the Department of Commerce General Counsel (GC), NOAA GC, and NOAA Fisheries regional offices.
7. Investigate options that advance flexibility and reduce rulemaking timelines and cross train other NOAA Fisheries offices and the councils.
8. Improve accuracy, timeliness, and the cost effectiveness (where applicable) of data collection and reporting by coordinating and supporting implementation of electronic reporting and electronic monitoring.

Ecosystem Management Approaches

Advance and strengthen use of ecosystem approaches to fisheries management to improve sustainability of fish stocks, fisheries, and fishing communities.

1. Increase integration of ecosystem considerations in fisheries management by providing tools, guidance, and support the implementation of the Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Policy and Roadmap.
2. Engage in the implementation of the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy.
3. Advance coordination of bycatch issues across NOAA Fisheries and support innovative approaches to reducing bycatch.

Goal: Sustainable and Resilient Fisheries and Fishing Communities

Fishery Performance Monitoring

Improve fishery performance monitoring and documentation of fisheries sustainability.

1. Improve the quality, timeliness, and communication of stock status determinations.
2. Track and communicate the performance of annual catch limits and accountability measures and how that performance relates to specific regional challenges and national policy implications.
3. Increase acceptance that U.S. federal fisheries are sustainably managed by documenting conformance to accepted sustainability standards and effectively communicating results to relevant stakeholders.
4. Maintain and improve the effectiveness of the FishWatch website and related outreach programs in coordination with the NOAA Fisheries Office of Communications.



Goal: Sustainable and Resilient Fisheries and Fishing Communities

Sustainability of Atlantic HMS Fisheries

Improve sustainability of Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fishery resources through an adaptive, responsive, and transparent fisheries management process.

1. Ensure that management of HMS stocks continues to achieve long-term productivity and sustainability through timely and accurate quota monitoring and responsive management measures.
2. Ensure regulations are prepared and submitted in accordance with current NOAA Fisheries guidance and requirements outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law and work with the Office of Law Enforcement and the General Counsel Enforcement Section to ensure they are enforceable.
3. Support and participate, as appropriate, in the Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) and International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) stock assessment processes and prepare stock status determinations for Atlantic HMS in consultation with SEDAR and ICCAT scientists.
4. Develop, review, and revise rebuilding plans and management measures for Atlantic HMS stocks that are overfished or are experiencing overfishing to achieve long-term productivity and sustainability.
5. Consider strategies and implement, where appropriate, measures to improve social and economic performance of HMS fisheries, provide equitable fish and fishing opportunities, advance flexibility, and reduce regulatory burden.
6. Increase coordination with the NE and SE Fisheries Science Centers and the Office of Science and Technology to ensure that Atlantic HMS research and management needs are being met.
7. Increase accuracy, timeliness, and the cost-effectiveness (where applicable) of data collection and reporting through implementation and coordination of electronic reporting and electronic monitoring.
8. Support and advance U.S. interests and policies at ICCAT and ensure domestic compliance with ICCAT requirements, consistent with the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act.
9. Reduce duplicative or overly burdensome reporting, streamline and combine data collection activities, where appropriate, and increase stakeholder compliance with data collection operations and timelines.

Goal: Sustainable and Resilient Fisheries and Fishing Communities

Seafood Consumer Confidence

Improve consumer confidence in U.S. fishery products by helping to ensure their safety and advancing methods to address seafood fraud in support of effective domestic and international management of fishery resources.

1. Provide consumers with timely information on activities focusing on seafood safety and seafood fraud through web, social media, and email communications.
2. Launch the National Seafood Inspection Lab's (NSIL) species identification project.
3. Address changing import requirements of other countries and expanding product types and markets, by updating Fish Meal Program requirements, analytical testing, and product certification, working closely with the Department of Agriculture, the NOAA Fisheries Seafood Inspection Program, the NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs, and the Food and Drug Administration.
4. Continue analytical studies for NSIL's Mercury/Selenium Ratio Project to close information gaps hindering consumer confidence and to better inform U.S. government agencies that issue fish consumption advisories.
5. Streamline reporting requirements, increase the transparency of the systems, and reduce burden on U.S. trade entities by engaging in the modification and update of catch documentation schemes and reporting requirements for international fisheries management in accordance with our commitments under international commissions.
6. Identify desired data, and the most efficient method of obtaining that data, for species at risk of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing or seafood fraud for inclusion in a risk-based traceability program in support of the Action Plan from the Presidential Task Force on Combatting IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud.
7. Obtain and maintain third party ISO 17025 Laboratory accreditation status to provide assurance of international best practices and control for NSIL analytical procedures and results to federal agencies, foreign governments, and seafood industry clientele.

Goal: Sustainable and Resilient Fisheries and Fishing Communities

Effective Partnerships

Develop and strengthen effective partnerships with regional fishery management councils, advisory panels, interstate marine fisheries commissions, states, regional fishery management organizations, constituents, and other partners to achieve sustainable fisheries.

1. Increase and strengthen partnerships and collaboration with other offices within NOAA Fisheries (Regional Offices, Headquarters Offices, and Science Centers) and NOAA to advance OSF's goals, objectives, and strategies.
2. Continue consulting and coordinating with councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, states, advisory panels, and other partners during rulemakings, policy and science strategy development.
3. Strengthen relationships and provide meaningful participation with the Council Coordination Committee, its subcommittees, and the HMS Advisory Panel.
4. Support appointment of qualified and diverse members to the councils to advance the goals of the Magnuson-Stevens Act through communication and coordination of the council appointment process and NOAA Fisheries policy priorities with state governors, state fish and wildlife offices, Congress, and the Department of Commerce.
5. Develop and record best operational practices through development and regular review of Standard Operating Policies and Procedures (SOPPs) and Regional Operating Agreements in accordance with Operational Guidelines.
6. Facilitate communication and transparency in council actions through advance publication and notice of council meetings (including committees), improved coordination on financial disclosure reviews and reporting, and improved guidance for identifying and resolving any conflicts of interest by council members.
7. Improve opportunities for stakeholders and partners to share ideas and participate in the identification of management priorities and alternatives options in rulemakings, and, where appropriate, in policy development.
8. Strengthen relationships with recreational and commercial fishermen, fishing communities, trade groups, relevant regional, national, and international fisheries organizations, NGOs, and academia.
9. Improve state/federal collaborations through regular meetings of state directors, coordination with the interstate marine fisheries commission directors, and participation in Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission scientific, technical, and management processes.
10. Support our mutual mission goals with the states by pursuing opportunities to minimize redundancy and improve efficiency, and through development and execution of cooperative agreements.

Goal: Sustainable and Resilient Fisheries and Fishing Communities

Communications and Outreach

Improve communication of OSF products and activities to external audiences using cost-effective communication tools, consultations, and outreach activities.

1. Increase use of social media to communicate to external audiences and drive traffic to the OSF website and promote social media and mobile communications in data reporting and outreach.
2. Routinely evaluate communications activities through website analytics and social media impressions to determine effectiveness and guide future communications planning efforts.
3. Promote web-based communication through maintenance of user friendly websites and email lists that are updated routinely and accurately.
4. Promote cost-effective consultations and communication opportunities with constituents through the use of technology including integration of webinars and conference calls during public meetings and during public comment periods.





Goal: Organizational Excellence

Strategic Planning and Fiscal Accountability

Improve OSF's strategic position to maintain resources, and ensure fiscal accountability and effective internal controls.

1. Increase awareness of our capabilities, accomplishments, and priorities internally and externally, including through effective impact analyses of proposed changes to funding levels.
2. Implement tools such as risk management for efficient and effective budget planning, funds distribution, and acquisition and grants processes.
3. Annually identify and communicate existing and emerging OSF priorities.

Workforce Investment

Improve use of training, and succession, retention, and recruitment strategies that support employee growth and career development to ensure a proficient and effective workforce.

1. Provide opportunities to keep staff current in their fields, to improve and refine their interpersonal and communication skills, to maximize their leadership potential, and to pursue development opportunities as identified through Individual Development Plans or elsewhere.
2. Advance succession and recruitment strategies through regular updates to the workforce management and staffing plans, by developing processes to retain or capture institutional knowledge, and by participating in fellowship, internship, or other educational programs.
3. Provide adequate facilities and work environment for staff, promote a safe and hazard-free environment, and enhance the physical work environment as needed with the end goal of increasing productivity.
4. Evaluate emerging and existing information management capabilities and adopt where appropriate based on their ability to cost effectively streamline OSF business needs.
5. Use responses to Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to implement changes, when warranted, with input from the OSF Employee Advisory Board (EAB).
6. Support activities of the EAB, provide networking and career growth opportunities, and provide for a supportive work environment by identifying and sharing presentations, activities, and events staff believe will enhance workplace culture, job satisfaction, and morale.
7. Commit to a workforce culture built on respect for diversity and inclusion, trust, communication, teamwork, and innovation.

Goal: Organizational Excellence

Internal Office of Sustainable Fisheries Communications

Strengthen internal communications within and across OSF divisions and with OSF leadership.

1. Increase opportunities for face-to-face interaction between OSF staff and OSF leadership.
2. Provide regular written communication to keep staff updated on EAB activities, OSF projects, staff highlights, and upcoming events and provide staff an opportunity to communicate suggestions and/or concerns.
3. Maintain a web presence for staff with internal resources and policies for quick review, and timely and relevant content and updates to keep staff informed of events and updates in other divisions and with leadership.



Alignment with DOC and NOAA

NOAA Fisheries is a line office of NOAA, which is located within the Department of Commerce. The OSF strategic plan supports the strategic plans and planning documents of DOC, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries:

- Department of Commerce Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2014–2018 (2014)
- NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (2010)
- NOAA Annual Guidance Memorandum (2016)
- NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2016

Department of Commerce Strategic Plan (2014)

The Department is comprised of 12 bureaus that work in five key areas: trade and investment, innovation, environment, data and operational excellence. NOAA furthers the Department's mission with strong stewardship of the ocean's resources. Specifically tied to the NOAA mission in the Department of Commerce Strategic Plan (2014) is the following goal, objective, and key strategies;

DOC Strategic Goal 3:

Ensure communities and businesses have the necessary information, products, and services to prepare for and prosper in a changing environment.

DOC Strategic Objective 3.4:

Foster healthy and sustainable marine resources, habitats, and ecosystems (NOAA)

Strategies for Objective 3.4:

- *Strengthen capabilities to assess and monitor fish and protected resources*

Ensuring sustainable populations of living marine resources is a key Departmental mandate. NOAA will increase the precision of stock assessments, performing more robust monitoring. NOAA will use ecosystem management to ensure sustainable living marine resources. Integrated biological, physical, and chemical data and ecosystem modeling will be incorporated into fish stock and protected species assessments. More advanced technologies for monitoring living marine resources and ecosystems will be developed.

- *Improve recovery of listed species through innovative partnerships*

International, federal, state, local, tribal, and nongovernmental organizations play a role in conservation. NOAA will strengthen partnerships with these stakeholders to ensure greater collaboration toward the recovery and conservation of protected species in marine and coastal ecosystems. Greater collaboration will improve the quality and execution of conservation plans.

- *Enhance place-based conservation*

Through its coastal management and place-based conservation programs, NOAA will expand protections at current sites, and add protections at new sites. This approach preserves the economic and environmental benefits of these special places to local communities. NOAA initiatives such as the Habitat Blueprint framework will employ partnerships to improve habitat conditions for fisheries, and coastal and marine life.

NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan

The Next Generation Strategic Plan (2010) conveys NOAA's mission and future vision, as well as the road map for achieving the vision as laid out through the long term goals, and objectives. With the release in 2010 of the Plan and Executive Summary and in the 2013 Addendum, Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Acting Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, called on NOAA to focus on the following areas:

1. **Climate:** Through collaborative strategies, continue to advance the observations, modeling, and research necessary to understand climate change and its impacts; and transition mature climate science into regular, reliable, and relevant information services;
2. **Weather:** NOAA will build a “Weather-ready” nation by preserving and improving its ability to provide timely and accurate forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property through science, technology, infrastructure improvements and collaborative efforts with partners;
3. **Oceans:** NOAA will advance our efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine fisheries and recovery of protected species and their habitats;
4. **Coasts:** NOAA will deliver integrated data, information, products, and services needed to support resilient coastal communities and economies;
5. **Science and Technology:** NOAA will focus on developing systems-level understanding of ecosystems and phenomena—across missions and disciplines—with the goal of increasing the resilience of ecosystems, economies, and communities;
6. **Engagement:** NOAA will expand efforts to listen and respond to our customers' and stakeholders' concerns and better relate NOAA mission responsibilities and activities to those concerns; and
7. **Organization and Administration:** NOAA will further capitalize on recent initiatives to cut costs and improve effectiveness.

As one of five line offices in NOAA, the Fisheries mission is most closely tied to the objectives for Healthy Oceans goal within the Next Generation Strategic Plan:

***Healthy Oceans:
Marine fisheries habitats and biodiversity sustained
within healthy and productive ecosystems.***

Healthy Oceans' goal is to ensure that ocean, estuarine and related ecosystems—and the NOAA trust resources that inhabit them—are resilient and sustainable in the face of increasing threats and changing conditions. A sound understanding of these ecosystems, communication of this knowledge to decision makers and stakeholders, and the capacity and resources to support key NOAA programs are critical to fulfilling this goal.

The strategic objectives of this goal are:

- Improved understanding of ecosystems to inform resource management decisions
- Recovered and healthy marine and coastal species
- Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities
- Sustainable fisheries and safe seafood for healthy populations and vibrant communities

Annual Guidance Memorandum (AGM)

The purpose of the Annual Guidance Memorandum (AGM) is to focus the agency's corporate attention on near-term execution challenges and a balanced implementation of NOAA's strategy across mission areas given our mandates, stakeholder priorities, and the fiscal outlook.

From the AGM Priorities:

NOAA Priority: Provide information and services to make communities more resilient.

- Implement Next Gen stock assessments for species within NOAA's jurisdiction through advancements in monitoring and data collection
- Make measurable progress on recovering protected species.

NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2016

This document provides guidance to all NOAA Fisheries employees in executing our mission responsibilities by establishing a framework for development of FY 2016 priority milestones. These priorities consider the core mission functions in context of current fiscal conditions. For FY 2016 NOAA Fisheries will focus on the following core priorities:

- Ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations.
- Recover and conserve protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences.
- Improve organizational excellence.

All other NOAA Fisheries programs, projects, and investments (including Science and Technology, Habitat Conservation, Enforcement, International Affairs and Aquaculture) should be designed and conducted in a manner that supports these three core priorities and makes communities more ecologically and economically resilient.





U.S. Secretary of Commerce
Penny Pritzker

**Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration and Undersecretary of Commerce**
Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
Eileen Sobeck

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www.fisheries.noaa.gov

National Marine Fisheries Service

1315 East-West Highway
SSMC 3, F/SF, Room 13362
Silver Spring, MD 20910