

## Fisheries

Fisheries		2004 Actual	2005 Enacted	Uncontrollable & Related Changes (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2006 Budget Request	Change from 2005 (+/-)
Hatchery Operations and Maintenance	\$(000) FTE	57,993 459	56,754* 455	+909	-9	57,970 455	+1,216 0
Fish and Wildlife Management	\$(000) FTE	56,328 354	58,418* 355	+752	-9,169 +6	49,685 361	-8,733 +6
CAM (see General Operations Expenses)	\$(000)	[4,303]	[57]			[57]	0
<b>Total, Fisheries</b>	<b>\$(000) FTE</b>	<b>114,321 813</b>	<b>115,173 810</b>	<b>+1,661</b>	<b>-9,178 +6</b>	<b>107,656 816</b>	<b>-7,517 +6</b>

\*This reflects a technical adjustment to reconcile to the Department of Interior's support table.

### Program Overview

The mission of the Service's Fisheries Program is to work with partners to restore and maintain fish and other aquatic resources at self-sustaining levels, and to support Federal mitigation programs for the benefit of the American public. Since 1871, the Fisheries Program has played a vital role in conserving America's fisheries, and today is a key partner with States, Tribes, other Federal agencies/programs, and private interests in a larger effort to conserve fish and other aquatic resources. The Program components, the National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) and Fish and Wildlife Management (FWM), consist of more than 800 employees nationwide, located in 64 Fishery Resource Offices (including a Conservation Genetics Laboratory), 69 National Fish Hatcheries, 9 Fish Health Centers, 7 Fish Technology Centers and one Historic National Fish Hatchery. These employees and facilities provide a network that is unique in its broad on-the-ground geographic coverage, its array of technical and managerial capabilities, and its ability to work across political boundaries and embrace a national perspective.

America's fish and other aquatic resources are among the world's richest and provide enormous social, economic, and ecological benefits to the Nation. Despite conservation efforts by the Service and its partners, many aquatic resources are declining at alarming rates. Almost 400 aquatic species either have, or need, special protection in some part of their natural or historic range. The reasons for these declines are linked largely to habitat loss and the impacts of harmful non-native species.

In order to better conserve aquatic resources in the face of increasing threats, the Service and its diverse partners and stakeholders refocused the Fisheries Program and developed a strategic vision, *Conserving America's Fisheries: Fisheries Program Vision for the Future*. The draft National Fisheries Program Strategic Plan was developed as a logical extension of the *Vision*, providing strategies to implement the *Vision's* seven focus areas and performance measures and targets designed to track progress toward the Program's commitments to the resources. All Fisheries Program goals are linked to end and intermediate outcome goals in the Department's Strategic Plan.

The following seven focus areas, each with associated goals, strategies, and performance targets, are detailed in the draft National Fisheries Program Strategic Plan:

- Partnerships and Accountability
- Aquatic Species Conservation and Management
- Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management
- Public Use
- Cooperation with Native Americans
- Leadership in Science and Technology
- Workforce Management

While wild populations of fish and other aquatic species are adversely impacted by wildfires, drought, floods, predation, and positively influenced by the contributions of partners, these and other factors are beyond the control of the Fisheries Program. Nonetheless, achieving targets detailed in the Strategic Plan will help to sustain healthy fisheries and move toward restoration and recovery of imperiled species, including the ultimate goal of de-listing or downlisting aquatic species listed under the *Endangered Species Act (ESA)*.

To provide the basis for performance budgeting and accountability and to track the Program's needs and accomplishments, the Fisheries Program's Fisheries Information System (FIS) has been substantively modified to capture and track critical performance data with the addition of the Plans and Populations Modules. The FIS Accomplishments Module is now capable of collecting data to report all performance measures beginning in FY 2004. Meanwhile, working with DOI, OMB, and the Service's Endangered Species Program, the Fisheries Program developed a new outcome measure in FY 2004: Percentage of threatened and endangered aquatic species populations, as prescribed in Recovery Plans, that become self-sustaining in the wild.

In 2004, NFHS personnel worked closely with DOI and OMB as it underwent its second Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) review. The results of this review show that the NFHS has made significant progress in improving its program purpose and design, strategic planning, program management and program results/accountability. Based on the findings of the first PART review, the Service has asked the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) to conduct periodic, independent evaluations of the Fisheries Program. The SFBPC Team began its first evaluation of the Fisheries Program in Fall 2004 and their report is scheduled for completion in March 2005. FWMA is scheduled to undergo PART in the next two years, and is looking forward to the opportunity to demonstrate accomplishments, while working with OMB and the Department to improve.

Also during FY 2005, the Service will work with the Department and OMB to address Congressional guidance to propose changes to the Fisheries Program budget structure to more effectively track performance against the draft Fisheries Strategic Plan. Changes may involve consolidating two Fish and Wildlife Management subactivity program elements, Anadromous Fish Management (AFM) and Fish and Wildlife Assistance (FWA), into one program element, or more comprehensive changes to more closely reflect the focus areas of the Strategic Plan. Recommendations will be reported to the Congress during preparation of the FY 2007 Budget.

Based on a request from the Congressional appropriations staffs, the Fisheries Program conducted a detailed fiscal analysis at national, regional, and field station levels. The Committees were apprised of the following findings:

- The majority of base increases have resulted from geographic initiatives that benefited certain Regions/field stations.
- Salaries and benefits account for an increasing proportion of available funds. In five of seven Regions, salary and benefits account for more than 80% of available operating funds.
- More than 1/3 of Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance stations either had no increases in funding, or decreased from FY 2001 to FY 2004.
- Approximately 50% of National Fish Hatchery System facilities have not received FONS project funding during this same period.
  
- As a result of this analysis, Conference managers provided an increase of \$885,000 (before rescission) in the FY 2005 Appropriation to partially address these issues.

The fiscal analysis also revealed that NFHS annual maintenance funds supported less than half of the NFHS's annual maintenance needs, and that employees supported by operations funds were required to perform annual maintenance. Conference managers approved reprogramming \$4.0 million from deferred maintenance to annual maintenance so that operations funding previously needed for annual maintenance could be used to address operational shortfalls in the NFHS. In addition, the reprogramming will help ensure NFHS maintenance needs are addressed as they are identified, rather than be delayed and contribute to the deferred maintenance backlog.