



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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**NEW NATIONAL RECREATIONAL FISHERIES POLICY
RECEIVES WIDESPREAD SUPPORT AS IMPLEMENTATION BEGINS**

The National Recreational Fisheries Policy, a 15-page collection of principles, goals, and objectives designed to improve and safeguard sport fisheries in the United States, has been adopted officially by more than 50 public and private organizations participating in a National Recreational Fisheries Conference in Alexandria, Virginia.

In a statement read to the conference, President Ronald Reagan referred to the new policy as ". . . an important step forward. Its broad acceptance fosters hope that our children's children will be able to enjoy recreational fishing just as we do today."

"This conference and this policy mark a very important foundation for marine and aquatic resource conservation for the 21st century," Fish and Wildlife Service Director Frank Dunkle told the nearly 300 conferees.

In a letter from Vice President George Bush read to the conference by Director Dunkle, the Vice President told the assembled fishery interests that, ". . . we owe it to our countrymen to continue our work to preserve and enhance our fisheries."

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During the 2-day conference, more than 30 nationally and internationally recognized fishery experts made presentations on ways the policy can further conservation and enhancement for this Nation's recreational fishery resources. Jane Quiring, Director of Recreational Fisheries for Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans; and Neil Martin, National Manager of New Zealand's Non-Commercial Fisheries agency, outlined how their respective countries developed their recent national fishery policies and the progress of their implementation.

In his remarks to the conference, Dunkle emphasized that ". . . the policy is national, not Federal. Every group, every agency and organization that subscribes to it can and should tailor it to their situation. It is not a list of Federal 'oughts,' it is a sampler of opportunities anyone interested in the future of fisheries can readily relate to and work to carry out."

After the conference, Dunkle announced that his agency would begin an immediate implementation of the policy. "I had said at the outset of this policy development process more than 15 months ago that the Service was proud to play a leadership role in helping guide the creation of the policy, and we would not shrink back when it became a reality. We are ready to go with our first phase of implementation--all of which can begin under existing Fish and Wildlife Service authorities and within current budgets."

Dunkle said that the first phase would include establishment of a National Recreational Fisheries Policy liaison office to coordinate Service efforts with those of other signatories. The Service will also initiate a review, and updating if necessary, of the agency's Fisheries Statement of Responsibilities and Role, its guiding fishery plan issued in 1985.

"The Service will begin making immediate moves to elevate fishery resource management on national wildlife refuges to a level commensurate with their biological and public use values, with emphasis on providing quality fishing opportunities. Where fisheries are compatible with the primary purpose of the refuge, we intend to move quickly forward," Dunkle said.

"In the spirit of the new policy and in recognition of some major resource needs," Dunkle continued, "we want to explore the possibility of improving management of some of our Nation's largest interjurisdictional inland fisheries--our major inland rivers--the Ohio, the Missouri, and the Mississippi."

Dunkle noted that the proposed project for the three river systems would be long-term and could proceed only if bordering states were interested in pursuing the management partnership.

The Director also said he would consider establishing an urban angling coordination office as part of the implementation phase.

The urban angling program coordinator would serve an information clearinghouse function and would provide technical assistance and liaison between state and municipal governments on aquatic habitat conservation and recreational fishing opportunities in urban settings. "I do not believe the Federal government should be directly involved in conducting urban angling programs," Dunkle said. "We do, however, have a valid advisory role to provide, and a responsibility for helping to safeguard aquatic and marine habitats even in urban contexts."

The new urban function would be housed in the Division of Federal Aid and funded via administrative funds provided to the Service through the Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Act, with the Wallop-Breaux amendments.

Final copies of the signed National Recreational Fisheries Policy will be available early this fall from the Assistant Director--Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240.