



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ANNOUNCES ACTION PLAN
TO ENHANCE NATION'S FISHERY AND AQUATIC RESOURCES**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced an innovative action plan to assure healthy, self-sustaining fishery resources through the restoration of America's aquatic ecosystems.

Nationally significant inland and coastal fisheries continue to decline due to habitat loss or alteration. In the past 100 years at least 27 species and 13 subspecies of North American fishes have become extinct. Forty-five percent of this country's endangered and threatened species are aquatic.

"We must make a comprehensive effort to restore the natural support systems that allow our fish populations to grow and thrive," said Service Director Mollie Beattie. "The best thing we can do for America's anglers is to bring back to good health our rivers, lakes, and streams."

Commercial and recreational fishing industries have also suffered severe financial losses as a result of declining fish populations. The decline of Atlantic Coast striped bass caused the loss of an estimated 7,500 jobs and cost some \$220 million between 1974 and 1980.

(more)

Since 1990, estimated economic losses to Great Lakes fishing industries have topped \$1.4 billion annually. In addition, the commercial harvest of Pacific salmon off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California which was valued at \$200 million in 1980, plummeted to \$120 million by 1990.

The Service's "Action Plan for Fishery Resources and Aquatic Ecosystems" seeks to enhance fishery resources of high recreational, economic, and social value. Through the scientific management of aquatic communities and wild populations, as well as the conservation of these resources on an ecosystem basis, the agency hopes to achieve long-term sustainability of fisheries nationwide.

Specifically, the Service is to initiate partnerships with other Federal agencies, state, local, and Tribal governments, and private organizations to address various fisheries management concerns such as the propagation of native species, the prevention and control of harmful nonindigenous species such as the ruffe and zebra mussel which are wrecking havoc in the Great Lakes, water quality, and Federal mitigation efforts.

"Our mission must be to provide the leadership along with State fish and wildlife agencies to conserve, restore, and enhance aquatic ecosystems, so they will be there for future generations to enjoy," Beattie said.

Another high-priority item mandated by the plan is the recovery of declining, threatened or endangered aquatic species. The Service will assist other Federal agencies in developing more effective fish conservation plans on federally-managed land. In addition, the agency is to implement comprehensive fishery management plans and assessments on all national wildlife refuges with aquatic habitat.

"One of my goals is the restoration of America's aquatic ecosystems," Beattie said. "In my view, aquatic life is probably the best indicator of ecological health. If the fish, mussels, and other aquatic organisms are healthy, there's a good chance that the ecosystem is healthy."