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**Fish and Wildlife Service  
National Marine Fisheries Service**

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**INTERIOR AND COMMERCE DEPARTMENTS ANNOUNCE FINAL POLICY  
ON ADMINISTRATION OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT  
AND RECREATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Commerce Department's National Marine Fisheries Service today announced a final policy designed to improve administration of the Endangered Species Act as it relates to recreational fisheries. The policy announcement comes at the same time Federal and State agencies, conservation organizations, and the sportfishing industry are celebrating National Fishing Week June 3-9, 1996.

The policy is part of a larger Federal effort to improve recreational fisheries as required by Executive Order 12962 signed by President Clinton during National Fishing Week last year. The policy's development was spurred by the sportfishing community, which advocates improving aquatic resources both to benefit endangered species recovery efforts and to boost angler opportunities.

"The new policy will ensure consistent and effective administration of the Endangered Species Act while giving full consideration to fish species and habitats important to anglers," said Acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Rogers. "We will continue to seek the advice of the sportfishing community to help direct our efforts to avoid or resolve conflicts when they arise."

"The policy will foster sound endangered species conservation and restoration efforts while continuing and enhancing recreational fisheries," said National Marine Fisheries Service Director Rollie Schmitten. "Successful implementation will occur by searching for common goals and resolving conflicts through solid partnerships and counsel of the angling community."

The policy will steer the agencies in resolving conflicts between native fish restoration and recreational fishing on a case-by-case basis. It provides for all interested parties to be involved early in the endangered species recovery planning process.

The Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service are responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act and cooperating with State and Tribal agencies to manage fishery resources. The policy outlines steps the two agencies will take to ensure consistency in the administration of the Endangered Species Act; increase partnerships with other Federal, State, and Tribal fisheries managers, conservation organizations, and the recreational fisheries community; involve these groups in recovery planning and other actions taken for species listed under the act and those proposed for listing; increase public information regarding the relationship between conservation and recovery of listed species and recreational fisheries; and provide more fishing opportunities on Federal lands.

The policy was initiated by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, a Federally chartered panel of sportfishing and boating advocates from the private sector and state government agencies that counsels the Interior Secretary on recreational fishing and boating issues.

The draft policy was published in the December 13, 1995, Federal Register and public comments were reviewed before the policy was made final. Most comments on the draft policy were supportive, while some raised concern about whether the policy would detract from or diminish Federal agency responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act. The policy's intentions have been more clearly stated in the final version, which was published in the June 3, 1996 Federal Register.

In addition to the new recreational fisheries policy, the Clinton Administration has worked continuously to make the Endangered Species Act work better. For example, the Administration has instituted several new policies to relieve restrictions on private landowners and greatly increased the use of habitat conservation plans that balance economic development with conservation of endangered species.