

# Currents

## News briefs on sportfishing issues and trends affecting the marketplace

### USFWS Announces Grants to Protect Coastal Wetlands across the Nation

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) announced 25 conservation projects to be funded through the 2009 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. The projects, totaling \$20.1 million, will benefit fish and wildlife on more than 13,543 acres of coastal habitat in 12 states.

The grants will be used to acquire, restore or enhance coastal wetlands and adjacent uplands to provide long-term conservation benefits to fish, wildlife and their habitat. States receiving funds are Alaska, California,

Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Maine, New Jersey, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. These federal grants will be matched by nearly \$27 million in partner contributions from state and local governments, private landowners and conservation groups.

[The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program](#) is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and funded under provisions of the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act.

### Two Million Jobs Generated by Commercial and Recreational Saltwater Fishing

According to a new report released by the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Fisheries Service](#) (NOAA Fisheries), U.S. commercial and recreational saltwater fishing generated more than \$185 billion in sales and supported more than 2 million jobs in 2006. [Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2006](#) covers economic impact from 1997 to 2006. It states that recreational fishing generated \$82 billion in sales, \$24 billion in income and supported 534,000 jobs in 2006.

The report also breaks down the sales, income and job figures for each coastal state. Saltwater recreational fishing had its greatest economic effect in total sales and jobs generated in Florida (\$7.6 billion in sales, 131,000 jobs), Texas (\$2.2 billion in sales, 34,000 jobs), California (\$1.9 billion in sales, 23,000 jobs),

North Carolina (\$1.2 billion in sales, 24,000 jobs) and Louisiana (\$1.2 billion in sales, 27,000 jobs).

[Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2006](#) also includes statistics on recreational fishing efforts, catch and participation rates, as well as employer and non-employer establishments, annual payroll and annual receipt information for fishing-related industries (such as seafood retailers and ship and boat building). The report provides a snapshot of fishery management plans, limited-access privilege fishing programs (a type of catch-share program), buyback programs, ecolabeling programs, the status of fish stocks and an inventory of protected marine resources.

### NOAA Fisheries Finalizes Saltwater Angler Registry for 2010

NOAA Fisheries released its final rule to creating a [national saltwater angler registry](#) that will help to ensure better data collection regarding marine fisheries. A requirement to establish a registry was included in the 2007 reauthorization of the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#). According to NOAA Fisheries, the improved quality of recreational fishing data achieved through a national saltwater angler registry will help demonstrate the economic value of saltwater recreational fishing, providing a more complete picture of how recreational fishing is affecting fish stocks. The final rule requires anglers and spear

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fishers who are not licensed by state natural resource agencies and who fish recreationally in federal ocean waters to be included in the national saltwater angler registry by Jan. 1, 2010. NOAA originally had proposed that registration be required beginning Jan. 1, 2009, but that deadline was extended to give states another year to put in place their own data collection systems.

### **NOAA Fisheries Issues Guidance on Catch Limits**

In January [NOAA Fisheries](#) issued its final guidance on annual catch limits. These limits are designed to restore fish stocks and end overfishing. The final guidance creates a system of catch limits, reference points and targets for each fish stock to be used in hopes of preventing overfishing. Accountability measures were outlined to help prevent catch limits from being exceeded. By 2010 catch limits will be required for U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries subject to overfishing. All other stocks must have annual catch limits by 2011. These requirements were set by the 2007 amendments to the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#).

### **Draft Strategic Plan for Lake Champlain Fisheries Released**

The Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative issued a [draft Strategic Plan for Lake Champlain Fisheries](#). The plan provides a framework for implementing the cooperative's coordinated fisheries-management programs. It outlines fish community goals and objectives and describes the role of each agency.

The strategic plan is based on guiding principles for ecosystem management, sustainability, the natural reproduction of native species, management of non-native and nuisance species, use of stocking, application of genetics, protection of habitats, use of science-based management and management accountability, with specific reference to human dimensions of fisheries management.

The cooperative, a partnership the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New York and Vermont formed more than three decades ago, provides direction for coordinated fish and wildlife programs in the Lake Champlain basin. Comment on the draft plan closed on December 31, 2008. The final plan is expected in late spring.

### **Washington State Approves New Policy for Columbia River Spring Chinook**

[The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission](#) approved a new management policy for the Columbia River's spring Chinook salmon. This policy promotes conservation of wild fish while providing stability for sport and commercial fisheries. The five-year plan is consistent with catch-sharing provisions a joint subcommittee of the Washington and Oregon fish and wildlife commissions recommended, while also providing additional early-season commercial fishing opportunities the Oregon commission sought.

Differences still remain, however, between the policies the two states adopted, so the commissions must find common ground on several issues before they can develop new regulations for the jointly managed fishery. Both state commissions based their new management policies on objectives recommended by the Columbia River Fish Working Group, a bi-state panel that includes three commission members, two fishery managers and several citizen advisors from each state. ■