



National Park Service - Department of the Interior
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**U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Natural Resource Information
Division**



Fact Sheet

Fisheries Management Program

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**General Authorities and
Limitations**

Fisheries management in the national park system is directed by policy and guidelines with roots in the founding legislation of the National Park Service, the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 (16 U.S.C. 1 et seq. [1988], Aug. 25, 1916, ch. 408, 39 Stat. 535). The act directs the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service to manage national parks and monuments to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." These general powers were broadened by the Redwood National Park Act (16 U.S.C. 79a-79q [1988], 82 Stat. 931, Pub. L. 90-545) in which the Congress gave further direction to the secretary to ensure that the management and administration of the national park system "shall not be exercised in derogation of the values and purposes for which these various areas have been established, except as may have been or shall be directly and specifically provided by Congress." Consistent with these broad authorities, the current fisheries management policies of the National Park Service emphasize the restoration and preservation of natural assemblages of native species.

The National Park Service manages all park resources with an emphasis on fundamental ecological processes, species, and communities. Fisheries management is designed to preserve or restore the natural behavior, genetic variability and diversity, and ecological integrity of fish populations. Management of resources and users in parks with migratory or anadromous species must include provisions for the preservation of these animals and their habitats inside park boundaries and for the cooperation with other management authorities to ensure the preservation of their populations and habitats outside the parks.

Recreational Fishing

Recreational fishing is a recognized part of the heritage of national parks and since the beginning of the National Park System has generally been permitted for the enjoyment of aquatic resources by park visitors. Current policies of the National Park Service allow recreational fishing in parks where it is authorized by federal law or where it is not specifically prohibited and does not interfere with the functions of natural aquatic ecosystems or riparian zones. In addition, these policies stipulate that any restrictions on recreational uses are limited to the minimum necessary to protect park resources and to promote the safety and enjoyment of visitors.

However, recreational fishing may be restricted by the service--after consultation with the states--at any time to achieve the objectives of park-resource management, to administer public safety and administration, or to accommodate public use and enjoyment.

***A Heritage of Fishing -
The NPS Recreational Fisheries
Program***

Fisheries resources and recreational fishing opportunities exist in more than 150 of the 374 units in the National Park System. More than 50 of them support a mixed diversity of freshwater, estuarine, and marine resources. These park resources are representative of the full spectrum of fishery diversity in North American aquatic habitats. Recent estimates by the National Park Service Visitor Services and the American Sportfishing Association suggest that these resources support more than 7.5 million user days of recreational fishing and have an annual economic impact exceeding \$583 million.

In 1992, the National Park Service adopted its recreational fisheries program, *A Heritage of Fishing*. This program established the framework for management of the unique resources and recreational opportunities in the National Park System while protecting, managing, and restoring fisheries and their associated

ecosystems. By implementing the recreational fisheries program, the National Park Service seeks to improve the management of its fishery resources, improve public understanding of aquatic ecology and angler ethics, promote research of fisheries and aquatic systems, and improve the quality of recreational opportunities for the public.

Sportfishing Regulations

The National Park Service Organic Act also grants the Secretary of the Interior the authority to implement rules and regulations as deemed necessary or proper for the use and management of the parks, monuments, and reservations under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Regulations may permit reasonable use and enjoyment of the resource but should not compromise the productivity and sustainability of the fisheries or their resource base. The objectives of fishery management should be biological balance and integrity as well as the quality of the fishing experience.

Areas inside park boundaries may be closed to fishing and other visitor uses to protect spawning and nursery areas, threatened and endangered species, or other fish populations at risk from habitat loss or overfishing. Fishing tournaments and other competitive recreational fishing events are generally not compatible with the goals and objectives of resource management of the National Park Service. Such events may be permitted only if the activity is clearly authorized and will not result in any derogation of the values and purposes for which the park was established.

Commercial Fishing

Commercial fishing is allowed only where specifically authorized by federal law or treaty rights. When commercial fishing is authorized by the Congress, the National Park Service must balance the allocation of the fishery resource with the needs of the aquatic ecosystem and must continue to provide the maintenance of self-sustaining fish populations and

minimize the adverse effects on other natural resources. The National Park Service manages most commercial fishing by permits and imposes a reporting system on harvest inside park boundaries.

Fisheries Restoration

Fish are important biological components of the national park system, providing benefits for ecosystem sustainability, recreation, and in some instances, subsistence. Unfortunately, many native fish species in park waters are threatened by past introductions of nonnative and exotic fishes, habitat losses, and poor water quality, many of which result from activities outside of park boundaries.

Restorations of depleted fish stocks and threatened and endangered species are high priorities for fisheries management in the national park system. Restoration of native fishes often involves the control or eradication of nonnative or exotic species. Restoration of many anadromous fishes, such as Pacific salmon species, may require removal of barriers to upstream spawning areas or the restoration of freshwater wetlands to provide critical nursery areas. The development of new laboratory techniques for genetic analysis provides park managers with tools for the identification and restoration of endemic fish strains. These techniques, when integrated with fish culture, improve the chances of restoring native fishes in natural areas of parks.

Interagency Coordination

Cooperation and collaboration with state and local governments are critical to the long-term sustainability of fishery resources in parks. Parks should seek consistency in harvest regulations with the state where such consistency will achieve the fishery management goals of a park. Cooperative programs are also often needed where state management actions outside the park may influence or directly affect park stocks. Specifically, the regulations of sportfishing and

recreational use must be evaluated periodically for not only inter-jurisdictional consistency but for assessment of their effectiveness in resource management. Such assessments must be coordinated with the monitoring of fish populations and the collection of user or creel census data.

Priority Management Needs

Basic inventories of park fisheries and aquatic resources and development of monitoring .

Assessment of the impacts of exotic and nonnative fishes on native fish populations.

Identification and restoration of depleted fish populations and stocks.

Monitoring and assessment of the effects of recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishing on aquatic or marine resources and development of regulatory strategies for managing these resources.

Evaluation of the influences of external activities and habitat alterations on park fisheries resources and development of management strategies for correcting or mitigating these impacts.

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