



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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IN REPLY REFER TO
N1423 (490)

JUN 8 1994

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors
Superintendents

From: Acting Associate Director, Natural Resources

Subject: Guidelines for Preparation of Fishery Management Plans (FMP)

Management of fisheries resources in units of the National Park Service are often complicated and require a level of planning greater than that routinely provided in Resource Management Plans or Water Resource Management Plans. In addition, fishery resources are one of few natural resource components within the park system that are subject to regulated consumptive use. The attached document, Guidelines for Preparation of Fishery Management Plans, provides Servicewide direction for development of park based planning documents that identify fisheries management issues and outline strategies for accomplishing specific management objectives.

Preparation of a FMP is optional, but highly recommended for park units with significant fisheries resources, important recreational and/or subsistence fisheries, and for all park units cooperatively managed with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

As indicated in the guidelines, a FMP is a tool for the Superintendent and staff to address complex fisheries issues, identify management and research needs, and establish cooperative relationships with interested and/or involved organizations.

If you have questions regarding these guidelines, or need technical assistance in fisheries management, please contact Dr. Frank M. Panek, Fisheries Program Manager, Wildlife and Vegetation Division, (202) 343-1002 (WASO, MS-490).

John A. Dennis

Attachment

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

A Fishery Management Plan (FMP) should be prepared in all park units in which the management of fishery resources requires additional planning and focus beyond that documented in the unit's General Management Plan (GMP) or Resources Management Plan (RMP). For purposes of these guidelines, fisheries include all finfish and shellfish. In general, the plan is a step-down document from the Resources Management Plan that focuses attention on specific issues and problems in fisheries management. It also provides detailed strategies for dealing with issues, establishes management priorities, and outlines specific actions. FMPs can be developed for specific park waters or for all park fisheries resources. The organizational structure of the FMP is flexible, yet provides sufficient structure to establish consistency for the planning process.

Preparation of a FMP is optional but highly recommended for all park units supporting recreational, commercial and/or subsistence fishing and for all park units cooperatively managed with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies. In the latter case, it will be necessary for the FMP to clearly identify the authorities, roles, and responsibilities of all parties involved in fisheries management within the unit.

The FMP is a tool for the Superintendent and staff to address fisheries management issues. It also provides the Region and WASO with information for program planning purposes and coordination.

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

The specific actions developed in the FMP should be fully consistent with those in the RMP and within the general framework established in the unit's GMP. If a GMP and/or RMP has not been approved for the unit, then an approved FMP may serve as the sole planning document for fisheries management activities in that unit. However, the unit may not be eligible to receive funding from some natural resources funding sources (e.g., NRPP and Water Resources) without having an approved RMP in place.

Generally, implementation of the tasks developed through the FMP process should be developed as project statements in the unit's Resources Management Plan. Consequently, all FMPs should provide a 4-year plan of prioritized project statements and tasks including dollars and FTEs, for addressing fishery management goals and objectives for the unit. As project statements, the action items can be incorporated in

both the FMP and the RMP and its data base. However, FMPs are not simply a collection of project statements. The FMP provides a comprehensive strategy for addressing fishery issues.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Fisheries management in most NPS units involves coordination and cooperation with other federal, state, tribal and/or provincial authorities. This cooperation is often required in compliance with authorizing and legislative mandates. In other instances, interagency coordination is established by cooperative agreements. Generally, a Memorandum of Understanding establishes a mutual understanding and working relationship between NPS and state or local governments. The authority to enter into an agreement with a state fish and wildlife agency is provided in the Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Policy: State and Federal Relationships (43 CFR 24). Guidelines for Federal Assistance and Interagency Agreements (NPS-20) should be consulted in the development of these interagency agreements.

Whatever the framework for the relationships, development of all FMPs should be coordinated with involved federal, tribal, and state authorities. This is particularly important where state agencies regulate fishing activities, conduct stocking programs, and/or fisheries restoration or management activities in park units, or where there are treaty rights involving migratory species.

SCOPING THE ISSUES

Fisheries management issues are often complex, involving biological, ecosystem, social, political and economic aspects. For example, there may be multiple parties of interest which view the resource and its management from different philosophical perspectives or there may be the need for consideration of issues beyond the boundaries of the unit. The full spectrum of issues must be identified early in the planning process. To accomplish this, the Superintendent should schedule one(1) or more scoping sessions to identify problems and issues to be addressed in the FMP. The scoping session(s) should bring together park managers with other parties or individuals knowledgeable with the resource and its management problems. Information compiled during the scoping session(s) will generally provide the Superintendent with clear statements of need for developing a FMP.

PREPARATION, REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The Superintendent is responsible for preparation of the FMP. Review and approval of Fishery Management Plans is a joint process involving both the Superintendent and the Regional Director.

Following scoping and the preparation of a draft FMP by the Superintendent (or his designees), the Superintendent shall assemble a "Technical Review Panel." This panel shall convene at the pleasure of the Superintendent with the purpose of providing independent, technical review of the draft FMP. In some instances, the Superintendent may elect to complete the review by alternate means, such as by circulating drafts to panel members for review and then compiling comments, or by conducting a telephone or video conference.

The Technical Review Panel shall minimally consist of the WASO Fisheries Program Manager, the park and/or regional office fishery biologist (if available), a park resource management representative, two(2) fishery biologists from other NPS units, fishery biologists from involved Federal Agencies, a representative from each involved State Fisheries Agency, and representatives from appropriate treaty tribes, if applicable. A chairperson will be elected by the panel members for administrative purposes and to provide for coordination with the Superintendent. Additional scientific and/or resource management expertise may be sought at the discretion of the Superintendent or panel chairperson but it is strongly recommended that the review panel be limited to the minimum number of individuals necessary to effectively review the FMP. Ten (10) to twelve (12) reviewers would ordinarily represent the maximum number of panel members needed. The chairperson shall provide the Superintendent with the findings and recommendations of the Technical Review Panel within 45 days of the review.

Following the panel review, a final draft will be prepared and presented to the Regional Director and the WASO Associate Director for Natural Resources for review. Regional and WASO review and comment should be accomplished within 45 days.

All FMPs must be approved by both the Superintendent and the Regional Director. After approval, copies of the FMP will be sent to the WASO Associate Director for Natural Resources, the WASO Fisheries Program Manager, and the Denver Service Center for entry into the technical information system.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION

The FMP is a public document. As a step-down plan of the RMP, it is part of the overall park planning process and requires opportunities for public participation. The level of public participation in the planning effort should reflect the nature and scope of the issues, the level of controversy, and the number of parties of interest. The Superintendent should ensure a level of public participation commensurate with these concerns.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

In general, the FMP is not the document through which regulatory compliance is accomplished. However, in some instances where specific habitat modifications, species population manipulations, changes in fish stocking practices, and/or fishing regulation changes are proposed, it may be necessary to seek National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and public review prior to NPS approval of the FMP. Consult NPS-12 for additional guidance on environmental compliance issues.

Compliance needs in addition to those of the NEPA should be identified. This may include Section 7 Consultation pursuant to the Endangered Species Act for threatened and endangered species recovery and Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 Permits for alterations of wetland habitats or the placement of fill in any navigable waters.

AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS

The FMP should be revised every 4 years, or on a schedule consistent with the unit's RMP revisions. The plan may also be revised at any time when the NPS determines that conditions and demands on the unit have changed significantly or when changes in NPS management policies effect and/or influence fishery management activities and/or priorities within the unit.

PLAN MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Fisheries Management Plans should follow the general format provided in Appendix A. Additional information may be included to address issues and or problems unique to either the park or region, or issues that are expected to generate strong public reaction. The format may also be modified to address issues unique to the unit that were raised during the scoping sessions.

adopted: June 3, 1994

Format and Scope

The cover sheet should include the title of the plan and clearly indicate whether the plan is for the entire park or for a specific park waterbody. A month and date of preparation should be included immediately below the title. The following signature lines and date lines should follow the title:

APPROVED: _____
Regional Director date

The Executive Summary should provide an overview of the findings and a course of action for addressing fisheries management issues in the unit. It should be as short as possible (preferably 1-2 pages) but clearly indicate why the plan was prepared and its significance to park planning efforts.

Provide a Table of Contents for organizational and reference purposes.

Section 1. Introduction

a. Purpose and Need

Describe why a Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) is needed and how the FMP will relate to the park's General Management Plan (GMP) and Resource Management Plan (RMP). Indicate that the specific actions developed in the FMP will be fully consistent with those in both the GMP and RMP. Tasks identified in the FMP should be included as Project Statements in the unit's RMP.

b. History of the Unit

Provide a brief history of the unit and its authorizing legislation. Indicate the status of the GMP and RMP and the dates they were approved. Avoid lengthy narratives or descriptions already in other park documents.

Section 2. Overview of Management Policies and Authorities

The purpose of this section is to explore the legislative authorities and overriding management policies influencing and directing fishery management in the unit.

a. Enabling Legislation and NPS Authorities

This section should include appropriate citations and references from the park enabling legislation as it relates to fishery management and recreational, commercial and subsistence fishing. Fishery management objectives which are perceived to be in conflict with State and Federal programs and regulations should be brought out during the scoping process and summarized in this section.

b. NPS Fisheries Management Policies

Provide a discussion of NPS fisheries management policies and guidelines (see NPS-77) relevant to the issues in the unit. Generally this will include discussions of policies regarding fish stocking, exotic species management, restoration of native species, habitat manipulation, public access, and public use. Limit the discussions of policy to only those topics relevant to development of the management plan.

Section 3. General Physical and Biological Environment and Ecosystem Relationships

a. Physical and Biological Environment

Provide an overview of climate, geology, soils, vegetation, water resources, wildlife, and other resources affected by or influencing the abundance and distribution of fishery resources.

b. Ecological and Ecosystem Relationships

Provide an overview of the roles of fish in the unit's ecosystem and provide some discussion on the nature and general condition of this system. Do not repeat information contained in the GMP and RMP but focus on those elements relevant to the fishery resource and its management. Since many fishery management problems are watershed or regional in nature, identify any known threats to these resources from both within and external of the unit's boundaries.

Section 4. Status and Condition of Fisheries Resources

In this section provide a comprehensive description of the existing conditions including, but not necessarily limited to, the items listed below. This section provides a measure of our existing knowledge. In some units, little if any information may be available on the status or condition of the fishery resource.

- a. Provide an inventory list of species. Information on species distributions within park waters should be included when available.
- b. Provide a brief summary of species composition, relative abundance, and/or diversity.
- c. Identify any rare, threatened or endangered species and the status of any recovery plans or efforts directed towards management of these species.
- d. Identify any non-native or exotic fish species and describe any existing control programs.
- e. Identify the important sport, commercial and/or subsistence fisheries. Describe existing use, catch and harvest. Summarize any creel census and angler use data.
- f. Summarize any biological information on age-growth, age class distributions or fisheries indices (such as Proportional Stock Density, Relative Weight, etc.) for major sport and/or commercial species subject to harvest regulations.
- g. Describe any habitat limitations or threats affecting fisheries management, including issues related to water quality and quantity.

- h. Describe any public issues and or concerns regarding fisheries management and allocation of resources including any issues on fish consumption advisories .

Section 5. History of Fisheries Management in the Unit

a. Cooperative Management Agreements

Describe any existing cooperative management agreements and/or joint management authorities. Management actions of other agencies which present potential conflicts with NPS management policies should be identified in this section.

b. Regulatory and Fish Stocking Practices

Provide a brief regulatory history of recreational, commercial, and/or subsistence fishing activities in the unit (e.g., open and closed areas, minimum size limits, harvest limits, fishing seasons, gear restrictions, etc.). Summarize past stocking activities and include species, strain or origin (if known), and numbers and sizes released, and waters affected.

c. Restoration and Control Practices

Summarize past projects and efforts to restore and preserve fish species and to control or eliminate non-native and exotic fishes.

d. Public Use and Harvest

Summarize any information available on public use of fishery resources. This could include data on the numbers of recreational, commercial, and/or subsistence users, harvest and catch per-unit effort statistics, as well as, estimates of user preferences and expectations. Additional information on other forms of water dependent recreation such as boating, rafting, etc. and/or information on visitor uses of riparian zones potentially affecting fishery resources should be included in this section.

In this section identify any regulated water flows or water levels, reserved water rights, or any other water quantity or quality factors influencing fishery resources.

Section 6. Fishery Management Issues and Concerns

The issues and concerns for fishery management need to be identified during the scoping and planning process. These will likely focus not only on fish populations, stocks, and human use, but all relevant social, ecological, and policy considerations. It is important to include not only fishery biologists and resource managers in this process, but also representatives from other agencies and the public. The FMP should provide an

overall strategy, developed through a series of goals, objectives, and tasks, for addressing each of the issues and concerns.

Section 7. Fishery Management Planning

a. Goals and Objectives

Fisheries management goals and objectives should be consistent with park enabling legislation, NPS Management Policies, and NPS-77. Refer to the Service's Recreational Fisheries Program, "A Heritage of Fishing" as a guideline for scoping goals and objectives for the subject park unit.

Goals are general statements of intent or direction. However, they need to be specific to the resource base and consistent with both park management objectives outlined in the GMP or RMP, and NPS policy.

Fisheries management objectives establish standards for each goal. Each objective should be clearly defined and measurable, providing either a product or condition within some established timeframe. There may be multiple objectives for each goal. Objectives are the criteria for determining progress towards achieving goals over time. Careful consideration should be given to the choice of measures to define each objective.

FMPs should minimally show how NPS policies will direct management to emphasize the preservation of habitats and native species and perpetuation of natural ecosystem processes. In general, this will have priority over recreational fishing and other general park uses. However, in some units, natural systems have been replaced by altered systems such as reservoirs and regulated streams, or watersheds have been altered by activities and developments outside of the park boundaries and for which NPS may have little if any control. In such systems, fishery management may involve the management and perpetuation of exotic and non-native fish populations and include stocking, and habitat manipulations. Consult NPS-77 for guidance on fishery management policies for both natural and altered ecological systems.

b. Tasks and Priorities

An action item or series of tasks must be identified as the means for achieving each objective identified in Section 7(a). In general, tasks should be related to jobs, activities and/or projects and include specific budgets. In this section, describe in order of priority, action items related to inventory and monitoring, stocking, regulations, habitat, access, population assessment, interagency coordination, and use and harvest, etc. These action items should be written in a format consistent with the guidelines provided for the preparation of RMP project statements.

Identify specific fisheries and aquatic biology research needs. Research should be directed towards providing answers to specific questions relevant to the unit's goals and objectives.

c. Management Constraints

Identify in this section any administrative, logistical, legal, and/or public relations issues which could constrain the achievement of FMP goals, objectives, or tasks. Specific problems associated with achieving any of the goals should be discussed and a strategy presented for addressing these constraints.

Section 8. Public Involvement, Information and Regulatory Compliance

Development of a FMP should normally involve public participation. Any program(s) or proposed action(s) that may alter the public's use and enjoyment of park fishery resources is likely to evoke considerable local public interest. This section should detail the process employed by the unit to accommodate public comments into the final FMP.

Section 9. Bibliography

Provide a list of all reports and publications cited in the plan.

Section 10. Appendices

- a. List all the tables and figures in the FMP and cite page numbers for reference. This section may also include any information needed in support of the goals, objectives and task descriptions. Avoid inclusion of items found in either the GMP or RMP or lengthy descriptions of policy or legislation.
- b. List the appropriate RMP Project Statements providing the project number, title, staffing requirements, and funding requirements along with the FMP priority.

June 3, 1994