

# Marine Recreational Fisheries

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**International Game Fish Association  
National Coalition for Marine Conservation  
and Sport Fishing Institute**

*Marine  
Recreational Fisheries*

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Proceedings of the  
Sixth Annual Marine Recreational  
Fisheries Symposium  
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Compiled under the direction of  
Frank E. Carlton, Chairman  
Henry Clepper, Editor

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International Game Fish Association  
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# Introduction and Keynote Address

Frank E. Carlton, Presiding



# Introduction to the Sixth Marine Recreational Fisheries Symposium

Frank E. Carlton, M.D.

This is the sixth in the series of annual symposia dealing with marine recreational fisheries. They were conceived with three principal objectives:

To achieve recognition of marine recreational fisheries as an important element of national policy.

To identify major marine recreational fisheries problems and develop fresh solutions thereto.

To foster effective management regimes for the conservation of living marine resources.

Sponsoring the symposium are three organizations:

International Game Fish Association, Elwood K. Harry, president.

National Coalition for Marine Conservation; Frank E. Carlton, president.

Sport Fishing Institute; Richard H. Stroud, executive vice president.

The sponsors are grateful for the valuable cooperation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Richard Frank, administrator.

Professional and financial support is thankfully acknowledged from the National Marine Fisheries Service; Terry L. Leitzell, assistant administrator for fisheries.

The symposium's program was planned during the past year by a Steering Committee which has the following membership:

Frank E. Carlton, chairman, National Coalition for Marine Conservation.

Phyllis Cahn, Office of Marine Pollution Assessment, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Robert B. Ditton, Department of Recreation and Parks, Texas A & M University.

Edward C. Greenhood, Marine Resources, California Department of Fish and Game.

Elwood K. Harry, International Game Fish Association.

Robert F. Hutton, National Marine Fisheries Service.

John V. Merriner, Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences.

Robert E. Stevens, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Richard H. Stroud, Sport Fishing Institute.

Christopher M. Weld, National Coalition for Marine Conservation.

Henry Clepper of the Sport Fishing Institute is editor of our symposium book.

The general subject of the symposium is "Sciaenids: Territorial Sea Demersal Resources."

The program will consist of two daily sessions and five panels.

Panel 1 will provide an overview of the sciaenid fishery resources (the drums, croakers, seatrouts, weakfishes, and spot).

Panel 2 will examine the social and economic aspects of sciaenid fisheries.

Panel 3 will treat of the biology of sciaenids.

Panel 4 will describe their existing institutions and management.

Panel 5 will comment on the restoration, perpetuation, and monitoring of the sciaenids.

A discussion period will follow each panel.

At the conclusion of the program there will be a summarization with an assessment of research and management progress and needs.

We are most grateful to the three companies

that will host the refreshment breaks:

Normark Corporation, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Shakespeare Company, Fishing Tackle Divi-

sion, Columbia, South Carolina.

Plastics Research & Development Corporation, Rebel Division, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

# Democracy in Action

John Wilson

It is a pleasure for me to be here today and to meet Dr. Frank Carlton. I am pleased too to be here with the chairman of our Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, Mr. Perry Bass, a dedicated public servant who has his heart and mind on the future of our fisheries, wildlife, and parks. It is also a pleasure to be in the presence of an associate of mine and another dedicated public servant, Mr. Robert Kemp, director of fisheries in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

As a boy in the fourth grade I used to sit on the docks at Port O'Connor and catch many redfish and seatrout. As I got older we started going out in the Gulf for kingfishing, and I have seen the time when we brought back so many king mackerel in the boat that we could not close the boxes. We brought in 17 ling at one time, which ran up to 16 and 17 pounds. I have seen the time when we filled the boat with Spanish mackerel.

But that was a long time ago. There are still times when you can go offshore and catch a box full of kingfish or a string of redfish or seatrout. But it is not as regular as it used to be, and there are not as many fish as there used to be. I do not need Robert Kemp or the Gulf Coast Conservation Association or you biologists to make me know that a problem exists in the Gulf of Mexico.

The statistics of the Parks and Wildlife Department prove that a genuine problem exists for recreational fishermen, for the commercial industry, and for the fishery resource. And unfortunately, when Texas has a problem, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama must certainly have the same problem. The problem obviously exists throughout the Gulf Coast. Certainly, the Texas government has made an honest effort to solve the problem. Texas may be ten years ahead of other Gulf states in research and fisheries statistics. But not ten years ahead legislatively. I shall try to tell you what the

realities of being a politician are and not what the realities of being a fisherman are.

Some ten years ago I decided to get into politics. And I did it because I was mad, not about fishing, but about brucellosis. At that time the brucellosis program had my herd quarantined, and unfortunately I am still quarantined. But I have been involved in politics ever since, and I want to tell you now what that involvement has been and what it has meant to me.

First of all, I have great respect for the democratic process and great respect for those who serve it. But I now view it considerably different than before I got elected.

I was brought up to believe that service in the Texas legislature or any legislature for that matter, or public service itself, was the top. Unfortunately, that is not true. The Texas legislature is a mirror image of the general public. If you went out on the streets in Houston and stopped the first one hundred people who walked by you would have a good cross section of Houston.

You would also probably have a mixture of people who were like those in the Texas legislature and the House of Representatives. You would have some who are dedicated, capable, intelligent, and sincere. You would also have some who are alcoholics, some who are lazy, some who are not bright, some who do not care, and some who are not highly motivated. That is exactly the way a legislature is made up.

The general public and particularly the press seem to have an idealistic view of how democracy works. I suffer from idealism and a little idealism is not all bad. I thought every member of the legislature should be highly motivated, intelligent, and industrious. I found that is not true. It was frustrating to me at first, and it can be frustrating to you as biologists and to citizens who are concerned about specific issues.

All the facts and figures and information that you are developing about fishery problems do not mean much to the average legislator. He listens to similar problems every day. It would probably mean more to him if you would not take so long but would give him more time to spend doing something else.

Another thing I have observed about democracy is that democracy does not act, democracy reacts. It is one of the greatest failures in democracy, even though it is probably the best form of government that man ever devised and has worked well for us. But if you are idealistic, you are disappointed when you find that democracy does not act, or seldom acts. As a biologist and a researcher, you identify a problem, you see its implications, and you see solutions or future complications. You go to your government and say, here are the facts and figures and this will happen if we do not do something about it. But, unfortunately, few seem to care. And you think, what is wrong? Why doesn't somebody care? Well, there will be a few who care, but not enough to pass legislation to do anything about it. That is my experience.

Legislatures respond to crises, and the crises have got to be severe and hold public attention. If it is something the public wants done, the legislature will respond. I have never seen the Texas legislature fail to respond to true public desires and the true public wishes. Maybe an isolated segment of the public, such as we here today, has a desire and wish, but it must be of broad enough scope that the average citizen of Texas, or Mississippi, or Louisiana, is so concerned that he expresses some position to his legislator. A legislature is not capricious. It does in fact represent the public, but somewhat late, in my opinion.

What is happening in Austin, the state capital, right now? You are possibly aware of what research has shown in Texas, and what efforts are being made to solve what we consider a severe problem with redfish and trout. I serve on the Natural Resources Committee of the Senate. There are 11 members on that committee, from all areas of the Texas Gulf Coast; the chairman lives in El Paso.

The Gulf Conservation Association (GCCA) has pointed out to the public and brought to the attention of the legislature, what we believe to be a real crisis. Unfortunately, the position of GCCA is being opposed by those who have an economic interest in the resource — the com-

mercial fishermen and the Texas Restaurant Association.

The commercial fishermen will have little impact on the outcome of the pending legislation. Approximately 200 people make their living full time in Texas from harvesting redfish or trout. The 200 jobs are not the issue.

The support and the votes were there in the Texas Senate and in the Natural Resources Committee, until such time as the Texas Restaurant Association got involved. It has since changed the votes around in that committee so that we have 4 votes for and 7 votes against any kind of reasonable solution to the problem. Now that does not mean, for this session of the legislature, that any possible solution is dead. There is still a possibility that we will come forth with some type of legislation to solve part of the problem. The reason I say part of the problem is because I do not think we are going to solve it all.

We may end up having to accept half a loaf instead of a whole loaf. But we cannot place the blame on the Texas Restaurant Association or on the commercial fishermen. We need to blame ourselves; first, for not doing a better job of involving the public, and, second, for not doing a better job of involving all of those who have an economic interest in the fishery resource. GCCA has done an excellent job of public information, but it represents all the people I have heard from in the past year as to any concern for the fish.

The boating trades association obviously has not done the kind of job it should have done. Owners of bait and tackle shops, service station operators, hotel/motel owners have economic interest in the activities of recreational fishermen. They have not helped GCCA put forward a program that is in the best interests of Texas and the best interest, in my opinion, of the resource and sport fishermen.

So here we are sitting dead in the water and wondering what will happen. It is a system slow to move, hard to move, and probably rightfully so. It is frustrating. It makes you want to throw up your hands and quit. You must bow your neck and go back the next day and the next day and the next day, and the next year and the next year and, sooner or later, you will prevail if you are right. The system will respond to you.

That is the way I have found the legislative process. I have respect for it. I think it is one of the finest forms of government in the world.

I wish more qualified, sincere, highly motivated people would seek public office. They

would improve the process. And I wish more highly qualified, motivated, sincere people would help these people seek office, because they would also help the process.

Your problems of fisheries resource conservation are some among many that we in the legislature face every day. They are there today and they will be there tomorrow along with citizens who think they have more severe problems than fishermen and fisheries have. But do not give up. Those of you from outside Texas realize that the solution that will probably placate TRA will include provision to allow for the importation of redfish.

By allowing importation of redfish, we are going to increase the problem in adjoining states.

Commercial fishermen from other states will have a better market; they will be able to sell to Texas restaurants. I'll be the first to admit that this is no good answer but that is the way the legislature works. We are going to placate the Texas Restaurant Association. Maybe not this year, maybe not next year, but six years or eight years in the future, the public will recognize that the problem of fisheries conservation is real and the legislators will respond. Then, it will do something in Texas about our fisheries and their preservation for the future.

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Hon. John Wilson is a member of the Texas State Senate and of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources.



# Marine Recreational Fisheries Outlook for the Future

William G. Gordon

In what will probably be a prolonged austere budget climate we, representing the federal government, and you, representing the states and the marine recreational fisheries constituency, are going to have to look for new ways of doing business. For that reason, I focus my remarks on the outlook for marine recreational fisheries in the future, and suggest ways that we might work together in achieving maximum benefits from MRF. But before we discuss where we are going, let us look at where we have been and where we are.

Marine recreational fisheries were largely ignored in federal and state fisheries programs until the late 1950s. This, in part, stemmed from a near absence of MRF participation, catch, and economic information. Conversely, marine commercial fisheries were better understood, were more identifiable, quantifiable, and, as a result of their perceived impact on the economy, seemed to justify greater attention. Also, prevailing social and ethical values dictated that fishing for food was of greater importance to the nation than fishing for fun.

In 1970, when the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) was created within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the Department of Commerce, NMFS was given federal responsibilities for all marine commercial and certain marine recreational fisheries. Prior to that time, federal commercial and recreational fisheries responsibilities were handled separately by two sister agencies in the Department of the Interior.

Although marine recreational and commercial fisheries were combined in NMFS, in its planning and budget exercises, NMFS has considered them separately. This separation provided visi-

bility that NMFS and our constituents believed important. However, this approach adversely impacted our programs as the proposed budget went up through the Department of Commerce and Office of Management and Budget to Congress. The lack of understanding at these levels of the significant social, economic, and biological impact of recreational fisheries on our nation made our recreational fisheries programs prime targets for budget cuts.

In recent years, there has been an improvement in the understanding by managers at all levels and by the Congress of the importance of recreational fisheries. In spite of this improvement, we have had few successes in the budget cycle. One bright exception is congressional support for our ongoing statistical survey of marine recreational fishermen for catch, effort, and participation data. We hope this support will continue.

There can be no question about the importance of marine recreational fisheries. As more data become available, it is apparent that the harvest of marine recreational fishermen is substantial. Indeed, in many cases, the recreational harvest appears to exceed that of the commercial catch. In addition, marine recreational fisheries make a significant contribution to the nation's economy. In 1980, it is estimated that over 20 million marine recreational fishermen contributed \$6 billion in direct expenditures to the nation's economy. This does not take into account the multiplier effects generated by these expenditures and the thousands of jobs created as a result of marine recreational fishing activity. Additionally, marine recreational fishing provides high quality protein as food for the table and improves the quality of life for millions of Americans in

ways that cannot be quantified.

We believe that marine recreational fisheries will grow in the future if the resource is properly managed, if opportunities are provided for marine recreational fishermen to participate in their sport, and if government and private activities are conducted in a manner that will allow the MRF industry to thrive and expand.

In an attempt to clarify what the NMFS role should be in the future, we are currently reviewing our MRF activities and attempting to develop a realistic MRF policy for the agency to adopt. At all levels of government we are facing severe budget and personnel constraints which will affect what we are able to do. Further, new priorities developed by the Administration must govern, which may mean that old ways of doing business are no longer valid. In any case, a number of things must be considered as we attempt to develop our policy.

One of our major concerns continues to be the lack of comprehensive and reliable marine recreational data on catch, effort, participation, and social and economic information on which to base fisheries management and allocation decisions, as well as industry investment decisions. Our statistical effort on marine recreational fisheries is a good start, but just that. The two years that have been completed strengthened our belief in the methodology and pointed out the need for cooperation between the states, the regional fishery management councils, and NMFS in this ambitious, and very important effort.

We need better biological and ecological data on species of importance to marine recreational fishermen. Habitat loss and degradation continue to affect seriously the maintenance and growth of fisheries resources.

An effective interjurisdictional fisheries management regime is needed for those important species which migrate through waters under state, federal, and, in some instances, international jurisdictions.

Marine recreational fishermen require more and improved access to coastal waters and more ancillary facilities such as piers, artificial reefs, and marinas. A major portion of recreational fishing occurs within state jurisdiction, but most states lack a stable funding source to develop fully needed access.

Habitat enhancement could play a much larger role in improving angler access to and enjoyment of fishery resources. Technology is available, but the problem of how to transfer this technol-

ogy to practical application remains a difficult one under present funding constraints.

The marine recreational fishing industry is also faced with problems not unlike those of the commercial fishing industry. For example, fishing tackle manufacturers have identified a need for export market information and opportunities, problems with foreign trade barriers, and competition from imports. Marina operators have indicated that environmental restrictions, such as on dredge-and-fill and waste disposal, and lack of available capital at reasonable rates make it impossible for them to expand.

Projected cuts in government spending have been proposed by President Reagan. Congressional approval is required before these proposed cuts can be made, and some modifications may occur. However, we have to accept the fact that deep budget cuts are inevitable. Those which impact NMFS, and ultimately our ability to assist the commercial and recreational fishing industries, are primarily in the grant programs.

The new Administration, as a matter of policy, is leaning toward block grants to the states rather than categorical grants such as the NMFS Saltonstall-Kennedy industry development grants, and the Public Law 88-309 and 89-304 fisheries grants. The era of federal money specifically for fisheries activities may be drawing to an end. If block grants to the states become a reality, then fisheries programs will have to compete with other programs for scarce state funding. If marine fisheries, and more specifically MRF, are to compete effectively for those funds, it will be incumbent upon MRF constituents, commercial fishing interests, and state fisheries leaders to consolidate needs and interests, and present initiatives from the viewpoint of collective benefits from the expenditure of state funds. This will not be an easy task because fisheries may not be a high priority in some states. Therefore, we must join together to highlight the importance of fisheries and our responsibilities for these renewable resources to maximize our effectiveness.

Without doubt, NMFS's traditional approaches to fisheries programs will have to be reexamined in light of new departmental policy guidance. Secretary of Commerce Baldrige recently announced policy guidance which emphasizes international competitiveness of American industry, improving productivity and innovation by American enterprise, reducing government regulation of industry, and increas-

ing the department's ability to influence the federal government's economic policymaking process and decisions.

As a result, we must develop more stringent criteria for evaluating the need for fisheries management initiatives, recognizing that government action is not without significant public cost. Is fisheries management required in order to protect, maintain, or enhance the stocks? If so, management regimes must be designed to be cost-effective with a minimum of regulations, particularly those which impose inefficiency on fishermen and industry.

Further, the concerned user groups must be willing to participate fully in identifying and discussing problems, reaching compromise, and expediting the implementation of management measures. They also must consider financial contributions to support needed fisheries programs. In this respect, the "user pay" concept might be considered where fees for use of the resource are dedicated and set aside to provide support for specific programs or activities.

Perhaps it is time also to identify clearly the MRF industry on which the fishermen depend, and to discuss with them their needs. Traditionally, NMFS programs have been in support of the commercial fishing industry.

On March 4, I moderated a session to discuss options for managing migratory species which do not fall under the effective purview of the Magnuson Act. Many problems, frustrations, and challenges for fisheries management were articulated. The consensus reached reflected: (1) general agreement on the need for a regional state/federal approach for addressing interjurisdictional fisheries in territorial waters, (2) if possible, existing structure and institutions should be used to oversee management planning and implementation, and (3) that there should be no federal preemption in state waters.

Later that same day, "A Capital Hill Conference on the Future of Sport Fishing in America" was held. One of the major agenda items was the expansion of the Dingell-Johnson Act fund to include: (1) boats, motors, trailers, fishing line, as taxable, revenue generating items, and (2) a requirement that a proportion of funding be used for MRF activities. If Congress does amend the act, this could provide the added incentive to the states and MRF constituents to establish saltwater fishing licenses with the understanding that revenues generated would be dedicated for fisheries activities.

A recent report evaluating the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department program concluded that the lack of sufficient state funding for essential activities and capabilities was the most serious problem facing the agency. The evaluating committee recommended, among other proposals, that a marine recreational fishing license be instituted. The committee stated that saltwater sport fishing licenses appear to represent one of the most practical means presently known to raise continuing revenues for the state's marine fisheries program designed to benefit anglers directly. It also allows for better data gathering of saltwater sport fishing activities which can be used to prove the importance of these activities to the economy.

Several national surveys have demonstrated that, despite significant minority opposition, many anglers agree that there is a need for license revenues to improve state saltwater angling programs. If an annual fee of \$3 were charged, total revenues that could be raised in South Carolina might well exceed \$1 million annually. Whatever fee is charged, it should be indexed with inflation.

In addition to looking at new approaches to fisheries problems, we must cooperate in resolving an old one — poor communication. For our part, there may be good reasons why we are unable to do some things, but we fail to communicate these reasons. In other cases, we may fail to communicate the things that we are doing. In both instances, this lack of communication results in our constituency feeling that its interests are not being served. For your part, better communication with each other, with us, and with fisheries decision and policy makers would result in greater support for marine recreational fisheries programs. Communication will become even more critical in the future if we are to be jointly effective.

I believe that around the corner, beyond what is immediately visible, there lie the elements of a new beginning. The future for marine recreational fisheries looks bright so long as we can maintain and conserve our valuable fisheries resources, provide opportunities for our fishermen to pursue their sport, and encourage activities which will strengthen the marine recreational fishing industry. No one can do it all. We must work together, each entity doing the part for which it is best suited.

William G. Gordon, a fisheries biologist, is director of the Office of Resource Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. Among other duties, he is responsible for nationwide overview of the fishery management plans developed by the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils.