



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA seeks input on enforcement priorities

Public comment period on draft list of priorities open through January 9

Today, NOAA released a draft of its enforcement priorities and invited the public to submit comments through January 9. These enforcement priorities are the latest step NOAA is taking to improve its enforcement program, and will help the agency emphasize compliance through better communication with fishermen. Other improvements in the last two years include new leadership, higher-level review of charging decisions, and a new penalty policy to ensure more consistent penalties nationwide.

"Fair and effective enforcement is essential to our ability to rebuild and protect the public's fisheries and other natural resources, and to protect the many fishermen who play by the rules," said Bruce Buckson, director of NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement. "These priorities will help us focus our resources and strategically use our state and federal partnerships to provide the most benefit for marine resources and the American people."

NOAA's jurisdiction spans more than 300,000 square miles of open ocean and 85,000 miles of U.S. coastline, and the agency is charged with enforcing laws and regulations found predominately in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, and the Lacey Act. NOAA will continue to encourage compliance with and enforce all marine statutes and regulations for which it is responsible. To help accomplish its mission, NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement operates joint enforcement agreements with 27 coastal states and territories, and partners with the U.S. Coast Guard.

The draft priorities were created collaboratively with the fishery management councils, interstate fishery commissions and interested stakeholders, including fishermen, representing public, private and nongovernmental organizations. The draft priorities are available online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/> and <http://www.gc.noaa.gov/enforce-office.html>.

The national priorities focus on:

- Helping the fishing industry understand and follow regulations that support sustainable fish stocks and a sustainable fishing industry
- Implementing compliance and enforcement plans for catch share management
- Monitoring fish product imports for compliance with domestic and international laws and regulations
- Protecting marine resources in National Marine Sanctuaries
- Protecting marine mammal and endangered species by enforcing bycatch reduction, gear, and closed area regulations
- Supporting observer programs, which collect critical scientific data about fish stock status, bycatch, and fishery interactions with protected species

NOAA began working on enforcement priorities during the NOAA National Enforcement Summit in August 2010, which brought together more than 60 stakeholders from the commercial and recreational fishing industries, non-governmental organizations, and state and federal enforcement agencies. Following the summit, NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement and NOAA's Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation solicited further recommendations for

priorities by reaching out to fishery management councils, interstate commissions and other stakeholders, inviting comments to be sent to the Special Agents in Charge of NOAA's six enforcement divisions or to NOAA's Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation.

Comments on NOAA's Enforcement Priorities may be submitted via email at enforcementpriorities@noaa.gov; via fax at 301-427-2055, attention Acting Deputy Director Tracy Dunn; or by sending hard copy to Acting Deputy Director Tracy Dunn c/o NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement, 8484 Georgia Ave., Suite 415, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Comments will not be accepted by phone.

For a complete list of NOAA enforcement reforms, go to <http://www.noaa.gov/lawenforcementupdates/>.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and our other [social media channels](#).

For more information:

NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/>

NOAA enforcement reforms: <http://www.noaa.gov/lawenforcementupdates/>.