

Coral Reef Task Force
35th Meeting
February 18, 2016
Washington, DC

Public Comment
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Thank you very much for allowing me to submit a public comment at today's Coral Reef Task Force meeting. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Taylor Pool, I am the Policy Analyst with the American Fisheries Society (AFS).

We, at AFS, would like to bring an initiative we are conducting to the Task Force's attention, entitled *The Future of the Nation's Aquatic Resources: Recommendations for the Next Administration*. We believe the installation of a new Presidential administration in January 2017 presents a unique opportunity for the fisheries community to present a set of thoughtfully developed recommendations that support the conservation, enhancement, and management of our nation's aquatic resources, both freshwater and marine.

In an effort to have the greatest impact, the formulation of these recommendations needs to be as collaborative a process possible; and, the final product will be presented as such. As this process is launched, AFS is serving as a convening body; but, we will be looking for other organizations to share a leadership role as the process continues. Representatives from all organizations, agencies, and institutions that work on aquatic resource issues are encouraged to participate by providing comments, either on topic areas that should be included or specific recommendations. Comments may be made in person at various discussion meetings or via email.

AFS will be conducting and attending meetings from now until mid-summer to gather comments, and to reach out to as many individuals and organizations as possible. Our initial in-person strategy meeting was held on February 9th. The meeting was very successful, with 15 aquatic resource specialists in attendance, representing state and federal interests, environmental groups, and industry associations. The meeting yielded some significant ideas on the process for formulating these recommendations, along with some specific content recommendations. I wanted to bring this effort to the group's attention given that fish habitat management and coral reef management were among the featured topics discussed at our initial in person strategy meeting. We would really appreciate additional involvement and recommendations.

This project will extend from now until November, with our efforts shifting from conversations to drafting recommendations beginning in mid-late summer. Draft recommendations will be presented at the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting in Kansas City; so, a little plug for our meeting, if you were not planning on attending this year, please do,

and help provide comments on our presentation. After the August presentation we will collect comments on what may have been missed or what else needs to be included, and then have final presentations in September and October, with the final production of the document occurring in November.

Our goal is to provide final recommendations to both campaigns before the election, that way each side can formulate ideas regarding aquatic resource priorities; but, we are also aware that we are working with a tight timeframe. A one-page handout that discusses this effort, and also includes future discussion dates, is included at the end of this document.

Thank you again for allowing me to update the Task Force on this project, and I would love to try to answer any questions you may have.

Contact information for submitting comments:

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Future of the Nation's Aquatic Resources: *Recommendations for the New Administration*

A new Presidential administration presents an opportunity for the fisheries, environmental, and natural resources community to collaboratively present a set of thoughtfully developed key recommendations that need to be addressed in order to support the conservation, enhancement, and management of our nation's aquatic resources and systems— freshwater and marine. To our knowledge, there is currently no other organization working to craft a set of similar recommendations.

AFS is currently working to convene organizations that work on related topic areas to pull together these recommendations. This collaboration will carry more weight with the new administration than any one organization solely providing recommendations.

Previous discussions/meetings have been had on this topic, and AFS is attempting to build off of this effort to gain some traction to effectively influence the next administration, but time is not on our side. Topical items likely to be included in our discussions/meetings are (not a comprehensive list):

- Climate Change (including Blue Carbon)
- Habitat Protection, Restoration and Mitigation
- Special Management Areas
- Instream Flow
- Conservation of Fish Stocks
- Aquaculture
- Invasive Species

If you or anyone within your organization is interested in helping us provide thoughtful recommendations on ways to implement actionable fisheries policies within the next administration, please contact Taylor Pool at tpool@fisheries.org or 301-897-8616 ext. 202.

Future Discussion Dates:

February 24th–
25th: NMFS
Council
Coordination
Meeting

March 8th – 9th:
NFHP Spring
Meeting

March 13th – 18th:
North American
Wildlife and
Natural
Resources
Conference

March 21st – 24th:
AFS Western
Division
Meeting

April 4th – 5th:
Northeast Fish
and Wildlife
Conference

April 6th:
AFS Governing
Board Meeting

April 7th – 8th:
AFS Tidewater
Chapter Meeting