



February 13, 2026

Dr. Neil Jacobs
Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Herbert C. Hoover Building, Room 5128
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Jacobs,

On behalf of the nation's recreational fishing and boating community, we write to thank you for announcing the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID) and to offer our support and assistance as you implement these transformative improvements to recreational fishing data collection.

We appreciate NOAA's recognition that the current system is not working and that a partnership-driven, regionally flexible, state-led framework is necessary to improve recreational data collection. The commitment to a 30 percent increase in state sampling funding, implementation of the optimized fishing effort survey design in 2026, and a structured co-design process through RAPID workshops are meaningful steps forward.

For decades, our community has voiced frustration with the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and its predecessor, the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). Despite numerous modifications over time, the program continues to generate recreational catch estimates that are often inaccurate and imprecise at the scale required for effective management. A recent study found MRIP overestimates recreational catch and effort by 30 to 40 percent, which underscores long-standing concerns that the current system does not consistently meet the needs of managers or stakeholders under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These data challenges have had significant negative consequences for anglers, coastal businesses, and access to fisheries.

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We are encouraged by the leadership of Evan Howell and NOAA's clear commitment to work directly with states, commissions, and stakeholders to build a more transparent and credible recreational data enterprise. Many coastal states are already leading the way, and your embrace of this new collaborative federalism in recreational fisheries data gathering heralds real partnership and ownership in this new system. A system that improves accuracy, precision, builds confidence, and better reflects on-the-water reality will strengthen conservation outcomes while supporting sustained public access to fisheries.

Our organizations stand ready to engage constructively throughout the RAPID workshop process and beyond. We are committed to being active partners in developing practical, durable improvements that restore confidence in recreational data and improve fisheries management.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to work side by side in this effort.

Sincerely,

Mike Leonard, Vice President
American Sportfishing Association

Jeff Angers, President
Center for Sportfishing Policy

Ted Venker, Vice President
Coastal Conservation Association

Chris Horton, Senior Director, Fisheries Policy
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Cc: Laura Grimm
Eugenio Pineiro Soler
Evan Howell