



Photo Credit: NOAA Fisheries

Wild Oceans

2021-2025 Strategic Plan

December 2020

Preface

Wild Oceans was founded by anglers in 1973. Like the sportsmen before us who pioneered wildlife conservation on land, we are passionate protectors of fish and the wild world we share. We bring conservation-minded fishermen and other ocean advocates together to promote a broad, ecosystems approach to fisheries management that reflects our expanding circle of concern for all marine life and the future of fishing.

Our programs emphasize conserving the ocean's top predators – the big billfish, swordfish, tunas and sharks that are the lions, tigers and wolves of the sea – while preserving healthy ocean food webs and critical habitats essential to the survival of all fish, marine mammals and seabirds.

So much of what we love about the sea, about fish, about fishing, is in the wildness. But that wild world, and the future of fishing, now hangs in the balance. Everything we do, every decision we make, must be guided by a clear vision of the future we want for our oceans and of how the fishing public and responsible consumers will fit into that future.

History

For over 45 years, Wild Oceans (formerly the National Coalition for Marine Conservation or NCMC) has been bringing people together to make sure there will always be plenty of fish in the sea. Whether you enjoy fishing, diving, kayaking or simply love the ocean, you've benefited from our long history of accomplishments.

We've been setting the national agenda for fish conservation since 1973 and our experience, long track record of achievement and willingness to take tough stands backed by the facts, have earned us an influential role in shaping national fisheries policy.



Vision

Keeping the oceans wild for the future of fishing.



Mission

Our mission is to keep the oceans wild to achieve a vibrant future for fishing by building coalitions and engaging in marine fisheries management using science, law and ecosystem based solutions.



Core Values

Science-Based
Integrity
Perseverance
Passion
Respect

Priority Conservation Areas

The Wild Oceans Board of Directors has identified the following themes that will guide our work over the next five years:

Theme: **LARGE MARINE FISH CONSERVATION**

Design and support strategies that sustain the health and key role of these predators, both in the oceans and in our lives. Our legacy is protecting the billfish, tunas, and sharks that are the lions, tigers, and wolves of the sea. Conservation of these iconic, wide-ranging fish requires a collaborative, long-term and multifaceted approach.

Theme: **SUSTAINABLE FISHING PRACTICES**

Promote practices that catch the right fish the first time, or let them live to swim another day. Our bottom line is ensuring that the ways we fish advance the long-term health of the resource, so that the resource can support fishing activities in the future.

Theme: **ECOSYSTEMS**

Build oceans of healthy and diverse fisheries now and for the future, by keeping the ocean food web intact from the smallest of prey to the mightiest of predators, and ensuring the habitats they call home are protected. We do this by leveraging science and collaborations to forge long-lasting change.

Theme: **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Advance innovative management approaches that address the impacts of changing ocean conditions and enhance the resilience of both fish and fishing communities. As warming waters alter where fish live and what they eat, we adjust our conservation efforts to keep pace.

Large Marine Fish Conservation

Goal: Support and develop strategies that rebuild and sustain the health and resilience of large marine fish, their habitat, and their role in the ecosystem.

Objective 1: Develop approaches that promote international compliance with precautionary rebuilding plans.

Strategy A: Participate in the development of U.S. trade policies and/or reciprocal agreements that require international partners to maintain conservation measures.

Strategy B: Participate in the development of precautionary harvest control rules for international fisheries.

Strategy C: Highlight unique approaches to meet international conservation and rebuilding mandates.

Objective 2: Identify management practices that build resilience to the impacts of climate change on migratory patterns, habitat, and trophic interactions.

Strategy A: Support science and research that will improve the effectiveness of existing and future management approaches.

Strategy B: Promote adaptive time and area-based measures (e.g., mobile MPAs) that protect critical life history needs.

Strategy C: Encourage measures that support small-scale and recreational opportunities.

Objective 3: Identify and promote the use of innovative fishing methods in addition to proven techniques to minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality, and promote sustainable levels of directed harvest.

Strategy A: Promote conservation measures such as use of circle hooks and live release of bycatch in domestic and international fisheries.

Strategy B: Advocate for research to replace non-selective fishing gears with alternative techniques.

Sustainable Fishing Practices

Goal: Identify and promote selective fishing practices that improve fisheries sustainability and support ecosystem structure and function, while minimizing bycatch and bycatch mortality.

Objective 4: Encourage the use of gear types or modifications that reduce catch of non-target species and mortality of released fish.

Strategy A: Advocate for the use of circle hooks, dehookers, descending devices, and other techniques in specific fisheries where supported by science.

Strategy B: Support the use of Exempted Fishing Permits as a tool to explore selective and innovative gears and/or gear configurations.

Objective 5: Foster the development and use of fishing practices that consider the ecosystem roles of target and non-target species.

Strategy A: Support efforts to determine impacts of fishing methods such as fish aggregating devices (FADs) on species of interest.

Strategy B: Encourage the use of bycatch limits, time and/or area closures, avoidance measures, and other practices to minimize harvest of non-target species.

Strategy C: Account for the ecosystem role of non-target species in fishery management plans.

Ecosystems

Goal: Advocate for the protection and sustainable use of fisheries resources in a manner that fosters healthy, balanced, and resilient marine ecosystems.

Objective 6: Advance the integration of ecosystem-based approaches into fisheries management.

Strategy A: Support efforts to develop ecosystem-level management reference points and harvest control rules.

Strategy B: Promote the incorporation of ecosystem indicators into stock assessment processes.

Strategy C: Encourage inclusion of ecosystem impacts analysis for fishery management actions.

Objective 7: Develop and promote management alternatives that account for and maintain food web linkages and biodiversity.

Strategy A: Provide recommendations on forage health indicators for prey species of interest.

Strategy B: Support the development of ecosystem catch levels for keystone species.

Strategy C: Prevent the development of new or emerging large-scale commercial fisheries for unmanaged forage species until sound scientific guidance is available.

Objective 8: Ensure that fish habitat designations and protections support ecosystem integrity.

Strategy A: Support integration of habitat assessments and ecosystem status reports into management body habitat policies and actions.

Strategy B: Promote policies that prioritize the compatibility of fishing and non-fishing activities with species habitat needs.

Climate Change

Goal: Advance fisheries management approaches and policies that address the impacts of changing ocean conditions and build resilient marine ecosystems for the communities that depend on them.

Objective 9: Develop and support governance approaches that proactively address changes in species distribution and abundance.

Strategy A: Participate in regional initiatives to develop adaptive, interjurisdictional management for important prey and predator species.

Strategy B: Promote efforts to improve the cross-jurisdictional utility of new and existing fishery data, surveys, and monitoring to management entities.

Objective 10: Identify solutions to address climate-related impacts to habitats and ecosystem productivity.

Strategy A: Evaluate the status of regional climate action plans and fish stock climate vulnerability analyses and encourage incorporation of outputs into fishery management decisions.

Strategy B: Encourage incorporation of climate variables into stock assessment processes and development of harvest control rules.

Special Campaigns

Goal: Develop and implement special, focused campaigns for large scale issues impacting the conservation of marine fisheries.

Objective 11: Implement a special campaign to improve the health and protection of Northern Pacific Ocean (NPO) striped marlin stocks and end overfishing.

Strategy A: Better identify NPO striped marlin spawning sites through research.

Strategy B: Work through existing relevant management bodies to secure greater protection for NPO striped marlin.

Strategy C: Identify important forage species for NPO striped marlin and promote sustainable management.

Objective 12: Annually review progress on active campaign(s) and consider new ideas for additional or alternate campaigns.

Strategy A: Annually identify 1-3 potential broad scale campaigns and thoroughly evaluate them based on impact, efficacy, timing, and feasibility for potential engagement.

Strategy B: Create an annual progress report(s) on current campaign efforts and successes to share with supporters and evaluate efficacy.

Governance

An organization that provides sound fiscal management, fundraising, administrative capabilities, and staffing resources to fully carry out the organization's vision and mission.

Goal: Improve Board structure and functioning to meet current and future organization needs.

Objective 13: Develop clear guidance for Board members to fully understand organizational direction and their role in meeting that direction.

Strategy A: Continue with a strong guiding Executive Committee

Strategy B: The Executive Committee will seek nominations and volunteers for each ad hoc and standing committee and appoint a sufficient number and makeup to fully carry out the performance of each committee.

Strategy C: Develop and implement an ongoing process for new and existing Board Member orientation on the roles and functions of the organization and fisheries management and policy process for domestic and international fisheries.

Objective 14: Develop a regular process for cultivating and recruiting Board members capable and willing to assume leadership roles in the governance of the organization.

Strategy A: Establish a strong Nominations and Membership Committee.

Strategy B: Analyze current and desired Board expertise to help identify areas of existing talent and areas for recruitment of future Board members.

Strategy C: Evaluate needs for future Board makeup, background, and skills for leading the governance of the organization in the future and identify individuals capable and willing to carry out these responsibilities.

Objective 15: Ensure that guiding documents and principles of the organization are up to date and meet current legal standards.

Strategy A: Revise Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation to reflect modifications to organization and Board structure and function.

Strategy B: Revise existing membership programs to develop a sound donor infrastructure supportive of the programs of the organization.

Objective 16: Establish goals for Board financial and/or skills contributions to support the organization.

Strategy A: Evaluate desired donation level from individual Board members or other contributions in lieu of financial support and develop individual contribution plans that meet Board member capacity and organizational needs.

Administration

Wild Oceans maintains efficient and effective administration to support the organization in the areas of Communications, Development, I.T., Website, Accounting and Human Resources.

Goal: Develop and implement effective communications programs internally and externally to the organization.

Objective 17: Develop consistent messaging for describing the mission and vision of the organization to external audiences.

Strategy A: Using the Mission, Vision, and Priority Conservation Themes, develop a consistent set of messages that staff and Board members can utilize in describing the priorities of the organization to a diversity of audiences (lay audiences to scientific audiences).

Strategy B: Review and ensure that all public-facing communications media incorporate revised messaging.

Objective 18: Develop a consistent and vibrant communications plan for communicating to external audiences.

Strategy A: Develop a basic communication plan for various identified audiences, including types of messages (e.g., technical, informational, action-oriented, etc.) and communication outlets to reach these audiences.

Strategy B: Develop an annual work plan that identifies desired audiences to which to communicate messages externally, mechanisms for reaching those audiences, and staff resources to accomplish this.

Objective 19: Develop and implement a consistent messaging plan for internal communication.

Strategy A: Staff will prepare a “Fisheries 101” educational module to inform existing and new Board members of the management and policy infrastructure impacting domestic and international management of marine fisheries.

Strategy B: Implement a process to facilitate Board input and action on key programmatic issues.

Strategy C: Implement a process for routinely updating the Board on important accomplishments and activities of the organization that includes a monthly call/virtual meeting on status of priorities and/or new developments

Strategy D: Develop a dashboard to track the priorities when identified and progress toward achieving the strategic Plan goals.

Appendix 1. Staff Activity Matrix

(Current as of 12/3/2020)

Existing (Current): Active advocacy and/or deliverables; **Existing (Monitor):** No active advocacy or action; **O:** Near-future role for activity

ASMFC: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission; **NEFMC:** New England Fishery Management Council; **MAFMC:** Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; **SAFMC:** South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; **PFMC:** Pacific Fishery Management Council; **WPFMC:** Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; **IATTC:** Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission; **WCPFC:** Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

	Current vs. Potential Activity			Priority Conservation Area				
Activity Description	Existing (Current)	Existing (Monitor)	Potential	Large Marine Fish	Fishing Practices	Ecosystems	Climate Change	Forum
Advance precautionary management of central subpopulation of northern anchovy at PFMC.	X	O		X		X		PFMC
Preventing the development of commercial fisheries on bullet and frigate mackerels that are unmanaged and for which there is little scientific information to guide sustainability.	X					X		MAFMC SAFMC
Promoting precautionary catch limits and management strategies for heavily targeted forage fish (chub mackerel, Atlantic menhaden and Atlantic herring), including management measures that minimize bycatch of non-targeted forage species.	X					X		ASMFC NEFMC MAFMC
Providing recommendations for forage base indicators in regional ocean health assessments that help guide fisheries sustainability.		X					X	ASMFC NEFMC MAFMC PFMC
Protecting critical fish habitat in the Atlantic from non-fisheries development and a changing offshore environment.			X				X	NEFMC MAFMC SAFMC
Keeping longlines out of the Pacific and protect longline closures in the Atlantic.	X			X	X			PFMC HMS

	Current vs. Potential Activity			Priority Conservation Area				
Activity Description	Existing (Current)	Existing (Monitor)	Potential	Large Marine Fish	Fishing Practices	Ecosystems	Climate Change	Forum
Ending the use of Drift Gillnets in the U.S. - specifically the Pacific.	X				X			PFMC
Preventing rollbacks in the rebuilding provisions, strengthening forage fish conservation language and addressing climate change within the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Identify a priority (ecosystem component species, HMS EBFM toolkit).	X			X			X	Congress
Rebuilding overfished forage fish stocks (Atlantic herring, Atlantic mackerel, American shad, alewife, blueback herring).	X			X				ASFMC NEFMC MAFMC
Monitor and rebuild recreational HMS in the Pacific, specifically Pacific Bluefin Tuna & Striped Marlin.	X			X	X			PFMC WPFMC IATTC WCPFC
Engage Board members in federal drift gill net legislation.	X				X			Congress
Promoting precautionary catch limits and management strategies for Pacific sardine.	X	O				X		PFMC
Promote and adopt sustainable fishing methods for HMS such as deep-set buoy gear in the Pacific.	X			X	X			PFMC WPFMC
Participate in Pacific Climate Initiative that aims to address how the PFMC can better prepare for climate change.	X						X	PFMC

Appendix 2. Strategic Planning Methodology

Wild Oceans reached a reflection point in the organization's history requiring an assessment of the focus and direction "to improve and maximize the organization's impact on marine conservation and management." As part of this overall organizational assessment, a clear understanding of the current and future issues related to marine conservation being prioritized by the broad marine conservation community was necessary, and the roles that Wild Oceans can most effectively play in addressing these issues.

Priority Issues from Marine Conservation Community

An assessment of marine fisheries conservation needs as identified by conservation organizations and management entities was conducted using two approaches. The primary tool was a brief online questionnaire distributed to nonprofit conservation organizations and trade groups, fisheries management entities/agencies, select leaders in the field, and academics. The secondary tool was a focused review of available strategic plans of relevant marine fisheries management organizations. A total of 83 individuals received the questionnaire, of which 60 participated. The majority (72%) were affiliated with a nonprofit conservation or trade organization, with 70% working in the Atlantic, 56% working globally, and 50% working in the Pacific (most work in multiple regions). See separate report for complete results.

Wild Oceans' Board Members and Staff Survey and Input

A survey was conducted of Wild Oceans' Board Members and staff to ascertain views on the current mission and vision, future goals, and alignment of their views with other marine conservation organizations on issues identified as priorities in the previous survey. The survey was distributed to 10 Board members and three staff on July 6, 2020, requesting completion within the next week. Seven Board members and three staff were able to complete the entire questionnaire within that timeframe, and one Board member completed it as far as they felt comfortable in responding. To supplement the questionnaire, telephone interviews using a semi-structured format were conducted with members of the Wild Oceans' executive committee and former president to further explore individual thoughts on the past successes and future direction of Wild Oceans' programs. See separate report for complete results.

Strategic Planning Retreat of Board Members and Staff

Although an in-person strategic planning retreat was originally planned, travel restrictions and health concerns related to the Covid-19 global pandemic necessitated a virtual strategic planning session consisting of one two-hour and one three-hour session. The objectives of this retreat were to:

- Identify and commit/recommit to an organizational Mission and Vision;
- Identify priority areas for focus in the coming years (focusing on 5-years but also extending to longer term);
- Identify organizational assets and resources needed to meet 5-year goals;
- An assessment of the ability to enhance organizational assets not currently available (e.g., funding/fundraising needs).

Refinement of Priority Conservation Areas

The Priority Conservation Issue themes and goals that were agreed upon during the Strategic Planning Session were further refined working with the Wild Oceans' staff. Two virtual meetings were conducted to develop specific objectives and strategies for meeting the four identified goals. These were further refined through interim reviews of the documents as they were assembled. As part of this process, a staff activities matrix was developed to help Wild Oceans' staff members identify and evaluate the areas in which they were already working and those areas that would require additional attention to meet the goals and objectives of the plan. Ultimately, the majority of goals, objectives, and strategies developed could be directly tied back to the input received from the marine conservation community via the survey conducted at the outset of this effort, thereby maintaining fidelity to the desired objective of maximizing the impact of Wild Oceans by working on "future issues related to marine conservation being prioritized by the broad marine conservation community." Additionally, Special Campaigns were identified with the contributions of staff and Board members to capture, identifiable, cross cutting issues that Wild Oceans could address through special campaigns in the near future.

Refinement of Governance Aspects

The Wild Oceans Board established an ad-hoc Strategic Plan Committee to help guide Board input into revisions of the strategic plan. This committee reviewed the draft Governance sections of the plan and held one conference call to discuss possible refinements to the Mission and other content. Recommendations from members of this committee were used to refine the content of this section of the plan.

Compilation

Once input from the staff and Board was addressed, all sections were assembled into a draft Strategic Plan. This was distributed to all Board members and staff for final comment and refinement prior to finalization.