



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

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The voice of fish and wildlife agencies

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To State Fish and Wildlife Directors:

This letter is to convey the support of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for the continued development of the FishSmart angler communication program (summary attached).

State agencies responsible for the management of publicly held fish and wildlife resources have a long-term and continuing commitment to communication with America's 34 million recreational anglers -- the broad audience of the FishSmart program. The FishSmart goal of increasing the sustainability of recreational fisheries by actively engaging anglers in implementing practices that will improve the survival of fish that they release -- whether voluntarily or because of regulations -- is consistent with the mission of fisheries management agencies to be wise stewards of our natural resources.

FishSmart builds off of existing programs rather than reinventing extensive new infrastructure -- something of paramount importance in these days of fiscal constraint. As part of this program, FishSmart messages, developed in concert with state and federal agencies and the recreational fishing community, will be integrated into the infrastructure established by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. This infrastructure utilizes state-of-the-art marketing and communications programs to actively drive anglers to information regarding recreational fishing activities. The conservation messages developed through FishSmart integrate well with the RBFF mission and will become an important component of the conservation strategy for RBFF.

With strong leadership from the recreational fishing community, including the American Sportfishing Association and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, FishSmart has been kicked off with support from NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The initial efforts focus on developing solutions to significant catch and release mortality associated with marine recreational fisheries in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf of Mexico, with particular attention to those fisheries impacted by high barotrauma-related mortality. As envisioned, FishSmart will expand to include freshwater fisheries with further development of the program.

We encourage you to learn more about FishSmart and to embrace it as an important fisheries conservation tool for your agency.

Sincerely,

Curtis I. Taylor  
President, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
and Chief, Wildlife Resources, WV DNR

Attachment