

NOAA Fisheries Service conserves, protects and manages living marine resources

NOAA Fisheries Service is an agency within the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our nation's economic, social and environmental needs. The NOAA Fisheries Service provides world class science, service and stewardship.

Where Can I Get More Information?

To get copies of the Ethical Angler Code and to find more information about recreational fishing visit NOAA's recreational fishing website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational/>



NOAA FISHERIES

1315 East West Highway
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Are You an Ethical Angler?



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The History of the Code

NOAA Fisheries Service adopted a code of ethical angling as part of a public education emphasis under the NOAA Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan. The code was developed in cooperation with a range of constituent groups, and was published in the Federal Register in 1999. The importance of an angler code has been recognized and adopted by many other countries and organizations throughout the world.

An ethical angler is a good steward who knows that part of the angling experience is to be in tune with nature- this means treating all wildlife with care and respect.

Let's Work Together to Preserve Our Sport

Recreational fishermen are leaders in conservation. Practicing ethical angling influences other anglers and increases public awareness of the important role we all play. Ethical angler behavior-- from concern for habitat, to best practices for fish handling and release – helps spread the word that Responsible anglers are a part of the solution for sustainable resource management.



The Ethical Angler

- Promotes ethical behavior in the use of aquatic resources
- Values and respects the aquatic environment and all living things in it
- Avoids spilling, and never dumps any pollutants on land or in the water
- Disposes of all trash, including worn out lines, leaders, and hooks and helps to keep fishing sites litter-free.
- Takes all precautionary measures necessary to prevent the spread of exotic plants and animals, including live bait fish, into non-native habitats.
- Learns and obeys angling and boating regulations treating other anglers, boaters, and property owners with courtesy and respect.
- Respects property rights, and never trespasses on private land or waters.
- Keeps no more fish than needed for consumption, and never wastefully discards fish that are retained.
- Carefully handles and releases all fish that are unwanted or prohibited by regulation, as well as other animals that are accidentally hooked.

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Ethical Angling Reminders

- Pay attention to restrictions on fish sizes, fishing seasons, species bag limits, and conservation measures. Proper catch and release methods may vary depending on fish species, water depth, and other factors. So make sure to plan your release strategy in advance by having available appropriate tools (dehookers, fish descenders, etc.) For some fish species circle and barbless hooks may help reduce injury and increase survival.
- Landing your catch quickly will minimize exhaustion and, whenever possible, the fish should be kept in the water during hook removal. The less a fish is handled and the quicker it is released, the better likelihood it will survive.
- Pay close attention to the impacts fishing activity may have on habitat. When fishing from a boat take care to avoid dragging anchors or other fishing gear on the bottom. An ethical angler should use marine sanitation devices to prevent untreated sewage from being pumped overboard.
- Scan the surrounding sky, land, and water for marine mammals, seabirds and sea turtles before casting your line to reduce risk of encounter.
- Minimize the hooking of seabirds and sea turtles, and treat any animals with care to avoid injury to both angler and animal. Retrieve as much line as possible to minimize entanglement and starvation of the bird or sea turtle. If possible remove the hook safely by cutting off the barb first and then extracting. If the hook is swallowed, cut the line as closely as possible to the animal and leave the hook in place. For severely tangled or deeply hooked birds and turtles call your local game warden.
- Never harm marine mammals, even if they attempt to steal the bait or catch. The law allows people to deter marine mammals not listed under the Endangered Species Act so long as the deterrence method is safe and the animal is not killed or seriously injured. The NOAA Fisheries Service has identified some potential techniques which may be used to deter problem seals and sea lions, including horns and whistles.
- Feeding wildlife may harm an animal, be illegal and could change the animal's behavior.