



Center for Coastal Conservation

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Answers to Questions on President Bush's Executive Order 12962

Editors: The Center for Coastal Conservation is aware of a great deal of interest in and possible misunderstanding of President George W. Bush's amendment to Executive Order 12962, which he signed and issued on Sept. 26, 2008. To assist in fully understanding this important Order, the Center has produced the following question and answer sheet. The Center believes that Executive Order 12962, as amended by President Bush, is the most significant protection of recreational fishing in more than three decades.

Q. What is an executive order?

A. Presidents have issued EOs since 1789, usually to establish policy for the operation of executive agencies in the federal government.

Q. Who issued the original EO 12962, and what did it do?

A. President Clinton issued EO 12962 on recreational fishing on June 7, 1995 to promote increased recreational fishing opportunities and to establish the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council among other matters.

Q. Exactly what does President Bush's Order say?

A. His Order is brief and simply states that "...recreational fishing shall be managed as a sustainable activity in national wildlife refuges, national parks, national monuments, national marine sanctuaries, marine protected areas, or any other relevant conservation or management area or activities made under any federal authority, consistent with applicable law."

Q. As it relates to recreational fishing, what is a "sustainable activity?"

A. This means anglers having the ability to engage in the activity, to have access to the water in the first place and to be able to enjoy the experience subject to sound conservation. President Bush's amendment to EO 12962 now provides federal managers with a mandate to take affirmative action to provide citizens the opportunity to fish recreationally. The Executive Order now tells federal managers that recreational fishing cannot be excluded unless doing so is required to meet statutory requirements.

Q. Did specific problems exist that prompted President Bush to issue his Executive Order?

A. In recent years there has been an attempt to use No Fishing Zones or marine reserves as a way to manage fish and fishermen. Taken to the extreme, these areas could

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exclude all fishing on say the west coast from three to 200 miles. What this Executive Order does is establish a national policy ensuring that recreational fishing cannot be excluded under any federal authority unless doing so is absolutely necessary to manage the area.

Q. How does the Executive Order affect freshwater fishing in federally owned and managed places like national parks?

A. The Executive Order has a dramatic impact on federal lands as well. For example, if the government creates a national park to promote recreation in an area but the area becomes so popular that vehicle access to the park becomes a problem. Before this EO, the solution could have been to stop all access, but now it prevents such a move by directing federal managers to do what is necessary to sustain recreational fishing in the park.

Q. Does the EO mean that recreational fishing can't be restricted at all?

A. Of course not. Recreational fishermen are conservationists first and understand that season, size and bag limits are necessary to conserve the fish. In many cases, catch-and-release fishing might be the right answer in order to sustain the fishery. However, what this EO says is that solving a conservation problem by excluding angling shall be the last resort, not the first choice.

Q. Who supports the EO?

A. The Center for Coastal Conservation is among numerous conservation groups that support the EO, including American Sportfishing Association, The Billfish Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, International Game Fish Association and National Marine Manufacturers Association.

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The Center for Coastal Conservation is a non-profit organized under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Center's mission is to promote good stewardship of America's marine resources. Learn more at www.CoastalConservation.US.