

U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy Recommendations for National Standards for Individual Fishing Quota Programs

Recommendation 19–15. Congress should amend the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to affirm that fishery managers are authorized to institute dedicated access privileges. Congress should direct the National Marine Fisheries Service to issue national guidelines for dedicated access privileges that allow for regional flexibility in implementation. Every federal, interstate, and state fishery management entity should consider the potential benefits of adopting such programs.

At a minimum, the national guidelines should require dedicated access programs to:

- specify the biological, social, and economic goals of the plan; recipient groups designated for the initial quota shares; and data collection protocols.
- provide for periodic reviews of the plan to determine progress in meeting goals.
- assign quota shares for a limited period of time to reduce confusion concerning public ownership of living marine resources, allow managers flexibility to manage fisheries adaptively, and provide stability to fishermen for investment decisions.
- mandate fees for exclusive access based on a percentage of quota shares held. These user fees should be used to support ecosystem-based management. Fee waivers, reductions or phase-in schedules should be allowed until a fishery is declared recovered or fishermen's profits increase.
- include measures, such as community-based quota shares or quota share ownership caps, to lessen the potential harm to fishing communities during the transition to dedicated access privileges.
- hold a referendum among all permitted commercial fishermen after adequate public discussion and close consultation with all affected stakeholders, to ensure acceptance of a dedicated access plan prior to final Regional Fishery Management Council approval.

Source: Preliminary Report Of The U.S. Commission On Ocean Policy Governors' Draft, Washington, D.C., April 2004, pg. 232-235.