



## **NOAA Fisheries Survey Summary June 2005**

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) distributed a 34-question survey to more than 460 NOAA Fisheries biologists, ecologists, botanists and other science professionals working in headquarters and regional and field offices across the country to obtain their perceptions of scientific integrity within the agency, as well as political interference, resources and morale.

### **I. Political Interference with Scientific Determinations**

Large numbers of agency scientists reported political interference in scientific determinations:

- More than one third of respondents positioned to make such recommendations (37%) have “been directed, for non-scientific reasons, to refrain from making findings that are protective” of marine life and nearly one in four (24%) of those conducting such work reported being “directed to inappropriately exclude or alter technical information from a NOAA Fisheries scientific document;”
- More than half of all respondents (53%) knew of cases where “commercial interests have inappropriately induced the reversal or withdrawal of scientific conclusions or decisions through political intervention;” and
- More than half of the scientists (58%) knew of cases “where high-level U.S. Department of Commerce administrators and appointees have inappropriately altered NOAA Fisheries determinations.” A substantial minority (42%) also cited incidents where members of Congress “inappropriately influenced NOAA Fisheries determinations.

### **II. Negative Effect on Wildlife Protection**

Only a slim majority of the scientists indicated the agency “routinely makes determinations using its best scientific judgment, even when political pressure is applied,” and there is further evidence that political intrusion has undermined NOAA Fisheries’ ability to fulfill its mission of protecting marine resources:

- Nearly two in three (64%) did not agree that the agency was effectively protecting populations and habitats of federally listed species, and more than two in three (69%) also doubted the agency could effectively aid in recovering threatened and endangered species;

- More than two-thirds of agency scientists (69%) did not “trust NOAA Fisheries decision makers to make decisions that will protect marine resources and ecosystems.”

### **III. Chilling Effect on Scientific Candor**

Agency scientists reported being afraid to speak frankly about issues and felt constrained in their roles as scientists:

- Two out of five (40%) said they could not openly express “concerns about the biological needs of species and habitats without fear of retaliation” in public, while more than a quarter (29%) did not feel they could do so even inside the confines of the agency;
- Almost a third (31%) felt they are not allowed to do their jobs as scientists; and
- A significant minority (18%) of scientists reported having “been directed by NOAA Fisheries decision makers to provide incomplete, inaccurate or misleading information to the public, media or elected officials.”

### **IV. Resources and Morale**

There was a broad perception that the agency lacks the resources to accomplish its mission. Not surprisingly, results showed a strain on staff morale:

- More than four in five (81%) thought that NOAA Fisheries lacked sufficient resources “to adequately perform its environmental mission;”
- Three out of five scientists (60%) did not feel the agency “is moving in the right direction.” This is consistent with a response from 46% that job satisfaction has decreased over the past few years, compared with half as many (23%) who reported an increase in job satisfaction; and
- More than two out of five (42%) scientists described morale as poor or extremely poor and more than half (56%) do not feel that “upper-management will stand behind” an employee with a scientifically solid, yet politically controversial position.

The survey was sent to 464 scientists, of which 124, or 26.7%, responded to the survey.

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## *Survey of NOAA Fisheries Service Employees*

National Response Rate: 27% (124 returned surveys from 464 recipients)

Pacific Coast (CA, OR, WA, ID) Response Rate: 23% (56 returned surveys from 241)

**Note: A certain percentage of responses for most questions were left blank. These figures are not included below causing, in many cases, the percentages listed to equal less than 100%.**

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### RESOURCES

1. NOAA Fisheries has sufficient resources to adequately perform its environmental mission of “stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management and the promotion of healthy ecosystems.”

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
1.8%	12.5%	10.7%	37.5%	35.7%
National				
.8%	11.3%	5.6%	38.7%	41.9%

2. Based on the division’s role in fulfilling the mission of NOAA Fisheries, indicate whether the resource allocation for your division is: *excessive*, *adequate*, *inadequate* or *don't know*. **Please answer only for the division in which you work.**

a. Sustainable Fisheries Division

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>excessive</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>adequate</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>inadequate</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>
Pacific Coast			
0%	0%	3.6%	12.5%
National			
0.8%	1.6%	12.9%	11.3%

b. Protected Resources Division

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>excessive</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>adequate</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>inadequate</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>
Pacific Coast			
0%	0%	35.7%	8.9%
National			
0%	4%	37.1%	7.3%

c. Habitat Conservation Division

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>excessive</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>adequate</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>inadequate</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>
Pacific Coast			
0%	14.3%	44.6%	3.6%
National			
0%	8.1%	42.7%	7.3%

3. I am afforded appropriate resources to keep up with advances in my profession.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	32.1%	5.4%	39.3%	19.6%
National				
4.8%	33.9%	2.4%	34.7%	20.2%

**PROFESSIONALISM**

4. I feel free to openly collaborate with my scientific colleagues employed in academia or other public agencies on issues relevant to my work assignments at NOAA Fisheries.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
14.3%	66.1%	1.8%	14.3%	3.6%
National				
21.8%	60.5%	2.4%	10.5%	4%

5. I am encouraged to actively participate in scientific professional societies and organizations.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	33.9%	5.4%	51.8%	8.9%
National				
6.5%	40.3%	5.6%	37.1%	9.7%

6. I am allowed to publish work in peer-reviewed scientific journals regardless of whether it adheres to agency policies and positions.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
1.8%	10.7%	57.1%	21.4%	7.1%
National				
0.8%	21.8%	52.4%	16.1%	7.3%

7. Within the agency I can openly express my professional opinion about the conservation requirements of species and habitats without fear of retaliation.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
8.9%	44.6%	10.7%	23.2%	12.5%
National				
12.9%	50%	6.5%	21%	8.1%

8. Outside the agency I can openly express my professional opinion about the conservation requirements of species and habitats without fear of retaliation.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
5.4%	32.1%	19.6%	25%	17.9%
National				
6.5%	38.7%	12.9%	21.8%	17.7%

9. I feel that I am allowed to do my job as a scientist.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
1.8%	51.8%	5.4%	33.9%	3.6%
National				

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6.5% 54% 4% 27.4% 4%  
**MISSION**

10. NOAA Fisheries is acting effectively to identify populations and habitats that need protection, such as

a. Species considered for ESA-listing

*strongly agree*    *agree*    *don't know*    *disagree*    *strongly disagree*

Pacific Coast

1.8%   30.4%   5.4%   39.3%   21.4%

National

2.4%   30.6%   11.3%   36.3%   16.1%

b. Marine mammals

*strongly agree*    *agree*    *don't know*    *disagree*    *strongly disagree*

Pacific Coast

1.8%   10.7%   78.6%   7.1%   0%

National

1.6%   19.4%   56.5%   15.3%   4%

c. Depleted fish stocks

*strongly agree*    *agree*    *don't know*    *disagree*    *strongly disagree*

Pacific Coast

0%   25%   37.5%   25%   10.7%

National

2.4%   24.2%   29%   27.4%   14.5%

11. NOAA Fisheries effectively protects those populations and habitats it has identified as at risk, such as

a. ESA-listed species

*strongly agree*    *agree*    *don't know*    *disagree*    *strongly disagree*

Pacific Coast

1.8%   17.9%   3.6%   46.4%   28.6%

National

1.6%   20.2%   11.3%   43.5%   20.2%

b. Marine mammals

*strongly agree*    *agree*    *don't know*    *disagree*    *strongly disagree*

Pacific Coast

1.8%   5.4%   69.6%   17.9%   3.6%

National

1.6%   14.5%   47.6%   25%   7.3%

c. Depleted fish stocks

*strongly agree*    *agree*    *don't know*    *disagree*    *strongly disagree*

Pacific Coast

0%   10.7%   33.9%   44.6%   7.1%

National

2.4%   15.3%   25%   42.7%   11.3%

12. NOAA Fisheries effectively addresses recovery of populations and habitats that are at risk, such as

a. ESA-listed species

*strongly agree*    *agree*    *don't know*    *disagree*    *strongly disagree*

Pacific Coast

0%   5.4%   8.9%   48.2%   35.7%

National

1.6%   11.3%   15.3%   41.9%   26.6%

b. Marine mammals

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	7.1%	75%	10.7%	3.6%
National				
0.8%	12.1%	54%	21%	7.3%

c. Depleted fish stocks

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	8.9%	39.3%	35.7%	10.7%
National				
1.6%	16.1%	29%	33.9%	13.7%

13. I trust NOAA Fisheries decision makers to make decisions that will protect marine resources and ecosystems.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	14.3%	7.1%	39.3%	37.5%
National				
0.8%	24.2%	4%	40.3%	28.2%

14. NOAA Fisheries is moving in the right direction.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	10.7%	17.9%	42.9%	26.8%
National				
1.6%	25.8%	10.5%	40.3%	19.4%

**POLITICS**

15. I know of cases where high-level U.S. Department of Commerce administrators or appointees have inappropriately altered NOAA Fisheries determinations.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
33.9%	28.6%	30.4%	3.6%	0%
National				
27.4%	30.6%	29%	9.7%	0%

16. I know of cases where high-level administrators or appointees from other federal departments or agencies (e.g. OMB, CEQ, USDA, DOD, DOI, ACE) have inappropriately influenced NOAA Fisheries determinations.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
25%	35.7%	35.7%	0%	0%
National				
20.2%	34.7%	41.1%	0%	0.8%

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17. I know of cases where members of Congress have inappropriately influenced NOAA Fisheries determinations.

	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast	5.4%	23.2%	60.7%	8.9%	0%
National	12.9%	29%	46%	8.9%	0%

18. I know of cases where state, tribal or local governments/elected officials have inappropriately influenced NOAA Fisheries determinations.

	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast	8.9%	32.1%	53.6%	0%	0%
National	11.3%	27.4%	57.3%	0%	0%

19. I know of cases where commercial interests have inappropriately induced the reversal or withdrawal of NOAA Fisheries scientific conclusions or decisions through political intervention.

	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast	14.3%	28.6%	53.6%	0%	0%
National	18.5%	34.7%	43.5%	0%	0%

20. I know of cases where non-governmental environmental interests have inappropriately induced the reversal or withdrawal of NOAA Fisheries scientific conclusions or decisions through political intervention.

	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast	3.6%	5.4%	46.4%	28.6%	12.5%
National	4%	8.9%	40.3%	32.3%	11.3%

#### **SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY.**

21. NOAA Fisheries strives to incorporate balanced independent peer review in validating scientific findings.

	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast	8.9%	46.4%	10.7%	28.6%	3.6%
National	9.7%	53.2%	12.1%	20.2%	2.4%

22. I believe NOAA Fisheries routinely makes determinations using its best scientific judgment, even when political pressure is applied.

	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast	3.6%	30.4%	8.9%	35.7%	17.9%
National	4.8%	38.7%	6.5%	33.9%	12.9%

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23. I have been directed to inappropriately exclude or alter technical information from a NOAA Fisheries scientific document.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>frequently</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>occasionally</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>seldom</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>not applicable</i>
Pacific Coast				
1.8%	12.5%	16.1%	62.5%	3.6%
National				
0.8%	8.9%	12.1%	67.7%	7.3%

24. I have been directed, for non-scientific reasons, to refrain from making findings that are protective of species.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>frequently</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>occasionally</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>seldom</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>not applicable</i>
Pacific Coast				
5.4%	14.3%	19.6%	57.1%	1.8%
National				
2.4%	18.0%	12.1%	56.5%	8.1%

25. I have been directed by NOAA Fisheries decision makers to provide incomplete, inaccurate or misleading information to the public, media or elected officials.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>frequently</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>occasionally</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>seldom</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>not applicable</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	8.9%	7.1%	75%	7.1%
National				
0%	6.5%	9.7%	74.2%	7.3%

**CAREER SATISFACTION**

26. I believe that scientists would find a career at NOAA Fisheries rewarding.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
7.1%	35.7%	14.3%	30.4%	8.9%
National				
7.3%	43.5%	17.7%	22.6%	6.5%

27. Over the past few years my personal job satisfaction at NOAA Fisheries has

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>increased</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>decreased</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>stayed the same</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no opinion</i>
Pacific Coast			
12.5%	53.6%	30.4%	3.6%
National			
22.6%	46%	26.6%	4%

28. I feel that NOAA Fisheries values my professional expertise and applies it to achieve the greatest scientific benefit to agency decisions.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
5.4%	37.5%	16.1%	32.1%	8.9%
National				
6.5%	41.9%	9.7%	29.8%	11.3%



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29. My office supervisor will stand behind staff who put forth scientifically defensible positions that may be politically controversial.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
17.9%	30.4%	12.5%	19.6%	17.9%
National				
16.9%	39.5%	10.5%	16.1%	14.5%

30. NOAA Fisheries upper-management will stand behind staff who put forth scientifically defensible positions that may be politically controversial.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i>
Pacific Coast				
0%	19.6%	19.6%	39.3%	21.4%
National				
2.4%	25%	15.3%	39.5%	16.1%

31. Morale within NOAA Fisheries is:

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>excellent</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>good</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>fair</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>poor</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>extremely poor</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>don't know</i>
Pacific Coast					
0%	12.5%	35.7%	30.4%	17.9%	1.8%
National					
2.4%	24.2%	28.2%	28.2%	13.7%	1.6%

32. My current position at NOAA Fisheries is:

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Management/Supervisory</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Non-Supervisory/Staff</i>
Pacific Coast	
8.9%	87.5%
National	
12.1%	84.7%

33. My current grade level is:

<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 9-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 13-15
Pacific Coast		
3.6%	69.6%	21.4%
National		
3.2%	61.3%	32.3%

34. The integrity of the scientific work produced by NOAA Fisheries could best be improved by:

Essay Response: 60.5%	No Response: 39.5%
Pacific Coast	
62.5%	37.5%
National	
60.5%	39.5%