

North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Principles for Sustainable Fisheries

The NWIFCA has adopted a Set of *Principles for Sustainable Fisheries* which will be used as a standard intended to guide the work of the NWIFCA in managing sea fisheries resources in its District. The Principles have been adapted from those developed by the Marine Stewardship Council who used an extensive, international consultative process through which the views of stakeholders in fisheries were gathered.

The Principles reflect a recognition that a sustainable fishery should be based upon:

- The maintenance and re-establishment of healthy populations of targeted species;
- The maintenance of the integrity of ecosystems;
- The development and maintenance of effective fisheries management systems, taking into account all relevant biological, technological, economic, social, environmental and commercial aspects; and
- Compliance with relevant local and national laws and standards and international understandings and agreements.

The Principles are further designed to recognise and emphasise that management efforts are most likely to be successful in accomplishing the goals of conservation and sustainable use of marine resources when there is full co-operation among the full range of fisheries stakeholders, including those who are dependent on fishing for their food and livelihood.

The NWIFCA further recognises the need to observe and respect the long-term interests of people dependent on fishing for food and livelihood to the extent that it is consistent with ecological sustainability, and also the importance of fisheries management and operations being conducted in a manner consistent with established local, national, and international rules and standards.

The Principles are intended to guide the efforts of the NWIFCA towards the development of sustainable fisheries within its District. They were developed assuming that a sustainable fishery is defined as one that is conducted in such a way that:

- it can be continued indefinitely at a reasonable level;
- it maintains and seeks to maximise, ecological health and abundance;
- it maintains the diversity, structure and function of the ecosystem on which it depends as well as the quality of its habitat, minimising the adverse effects that it causes;
- it is managed and operated in a responsible manner, in conformity with local, national and international laws and regulations;
- it maintains present and future economic and social options and benefits;
- it is conducted in a socially and economically fair and responsible manner.

Although the primary focus is the ecological integrity of the District's fisheries, the Principles also embrace the human and social elements of fisheries. Their successful implementation depends upon a system of management which is open, fair, based upon the best information available and which incorporates all relevant legal obligations.

PRINCIPLE 1

A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted, the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery

Intent:

The intent of this principle is to ensure that the productive capacities of resources are maintained at high levels and are not sacrificed in favour of short term interests. Thus, exploited populations would be maintained at high levels of abundance designed to retain their productivity, provide margins of safety for error and uncertainty, and restore and retain their capacities for yields over the long term.

Criteria:

1. The fishery shall be conducted at catch levels that continually maintain the high productivity of the target population(s) and associated ecological community relative to its potential productivity.
2. Where the exploited populations are depleted, the fishery will be executed such that recovery and rebuilding is allowed to occur to a specified level consistent with the precautionary approach and the ability of the populations to produce long-term potential yields within a specified time frame.
3. Fishing is conducted in a manner that does not alter the age or genetic structure or sex composition to a degree that impairs reproductive capacity.

PRINCIPLE 2

Fishing operations should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem (including habitat and associated dependent and ecologically related species) on which the fishery depends

Intent:

The intent of this principle is to encourage the management of fisheries from an ecosystem perspective under a management system designed to assess and restrain the impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem.

Criteria:

1. The fishery is conducted in a way that maintains natural functional relationships among species and should not lead to trophic cascades or ecosystem state changes.
2. The fishery is conducted in a manner that does not threaten biological diversity at the genetic, species or population levels and avoids or minimises mortality of, or injuries to endangered, threatened or protected species.
3. Where exploited populations are depleted, the fishery will be executed such that recovery and rebuilding is allowed to occur to a specified level within specified time frames, consistent with the precautionary approach and considering the ability of the population to produce long-term potential yields.

PRINCIPLE 3

The fishery is subject to an effective management system that respects local, national and international laws and standards and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require use of the resource to be responsible and sustainable

Intent:

The intent of this principle is to ensure that there is an institutional and operational framework for implementing Principles 1 and 2, appropriate to the size and scale of the fishery.

A. Management System Criteria

1. The fishery shall not be conducted under a controversial unilateral exemption to an international agreement.

The management system shall:

2. demonstrate clear long-term objectives consistent with NWIFCA Principles and contain a consultative process that is transparent and involves all interested and affected parties so as to consider all relevant information, including local knowledge. The impact of fishery management decisions on all those who depend on the fishery for their livelihoods, including, but not confined to subsistence, artisanal, and fishing-dependent communities shall be addressed as part of this process;

3. be appropriate to the cultural context, scale and intensity of the fishery – reflecting specific objectives, incorporating operational criteria, containing procedures for implementation and a process for monitoring and evaluating performance and acting on findings;

4. observe the legal and customary rights and long term interests of people dependent on fishing for food and livelihood, in a manner consistent with ecological sustainability;

5. incorporates an appropriate mechanism for the resolution of disputes arising within the system;

6. provide economic and social incentives that contribute to sustainable fishing and shall not operate with subsidies that contribute to unsustainable fishing;

7. act in a timely and adaptive fashion on the basis of the best available information using a precautionary approach particularly when dealing with scientific uncertainty;

8. incorporate a research plan – appropriate to the scale and intensity of the fishery – that addresses the information needs of management and provides for the dissemination of research results to all interested parties in a timely fashion;

9. require that assessments of the biological status of the resource and impacts of the fishery have been and are periodically conducted;

10. specify measures and strategies that demonstrably control the degree of exploitation of the resource, including, but not limited to:

a) setting catch levels that will maintain the target population and ecological community's high productivity relative to its potential productivity, and account for the non-target species (or size, age, sex) captured and landed in association with, or as a consequence of, fishing for target species;

b) identifying appropriate fishing methods that minimise adverse impacts on habitat, especially in critical or sensitive zones such as spawning and nursery areas;

- c) providing for the recovery and rebuilding of depleted fish/shellfish populations to specified levels within specified time frames;
 - d) mechanisms in place to limit or close fisheries when designated catch limits are reached;
 - e) establishing no-take zones where appropriate;
11. contains appropriate procedures for effective compliance, monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement which ensure that established limits to exploitation are not exceeded and specifies corrective actions to be taken in the event that they are.

B. Operational Criteria

Fishing operations shall:

- 12. make use of fishing gear and practices designed to avoid the capture of non-target species (and non-target size, age, and/or sex of the target species); minimise mortality of this catch where it cannot be avoided, and reduce discards of what cannot be released alive;
- 13. implement appropriate fishing methods designed to minimise adverse impacts on habitat, especially in critical or sensitive zones such as spawning and nursery areas;
- 14. minimise operational waste such as lost fishing gear, oil spills, on-board spoilage of catch, etc.;
- 15. be conducted in compliance with the fishery management system and all legal and administrative requirements; and
- 16. assist and co-operate with management authorities in the collection of catch, discard, and other information of importance to effective management of the resources and the fishery.

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Adapted from: MSC Fishery Standard: Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing.
Marine Stewardship Council, 2010