



NOAA FISHERIES ANNOUNCES WEST COAST LEADERSHIP CHANGES; STELLE TO HEAD NW AND SW OFFICES

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Last Friday (May 24) NOAA Fisheries announced several senior leadership changes that support West Coast operations.

Current Northwest Regional Administrator, Will Stelle, will take on the responsibility of regional administrator for the agency's Northwest and Southwest regional offices as the agency works on forming its new West Coast Regional Office.

At the same time, Rod McInnis, Southwest Regional Administrator, has accepted a new position at NOAA Fisheries headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, as the acting director of NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs.

Stelle has been regional administrator in the Northwest since June 2010 and, before that, from 1994-2000, during the first round of Pacific salmon listings under the Endangered Species Act.

In announcing the changes Sam Rauch, head of NOAA Fisheries, said Stelle's "extensive experience on ESA salmon issues provides a strong foundation for NOAA's mission to rebuild these valuable natural resources and promote the coastal economies that depend on them. Will is well-versed in other issues as well.

"Will has been our primary liaison multiple federal, state, tribal, and local partners on California Bay Delta issues. And, his success at bringing West Coast habitat and water rights issues to the foreground along with an emphasis on protecting and restoring ecosystems will help secure workable solutions for the many challenging issues facing Fisheries on the West Coast.

"To assist with the transition, Will plans to maintain offices in both Seattle and Sacramento," Rauch said in a "message posted" on NOAA national and regional web pages.

In addition, Rauch said, "Fisheries leadership is pleased that Rod has accepted his new responsibilities in the Fisheries Office of International Affairs. Rod is a veteran of NOAA Fisheries. He joined the Southwest Region in 1982 and has held progressively more responsible positions prior to becoming the regional administrator in 2004.

"We are pleased he is coming to headquarters to step into a role that is tailor-made for his skills and experience, including his decades of direct bilateral and international negotiations," Rauch said. "And, as the lead for International Affairs, he will continue to serve in his role as the Federal Commissioner to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission which is responsible for the conservation and management of tuna and other marine resources in the eastern Pacific Ocean."

In the coming months, NOAA Fisheries says it "will make more decisions about the structure of the new West Coast region and begin to implement those changes, so today's

marks the first milestone in what will be an incremental shift toward one region.

“Although other changes will take place, the agency will maintain all of its current physical field offices, within the region, and we will continue to provide a sustained level of service to our many stakeholders in California, Washington, Oregon and Idaho under the new structure, consistent with federal appropriations. We intend to have the entire region finalized and fully operational by the end of FY2014,” Rauch said.

