



NEWSCAST

The Newsletter of the Marine Recreational Information Program

**NOAA
FISHERIES**



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The Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is the way NOAA Fisheries is counting and reporting marine recreational catch and effort. It is a customer-driven initiative that not only produces better estimates, but does so through a process grounded in the principles of transparency, accountability and engagement.

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MRIP kicks off Road Show in New Jersey, heads to Florida in May

MRIP is conducting a Road Show this spring and summer to meet with constituents along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. The meetings provide anglers and other stakeholders the opportunity to pose questions, share their ideas and concerns, and learn the latest MRIP news.

The Communications and Education Team began its Road Show with a series of listening sessions, both formal and informal, with recreational fishermen in New Jersey at the beginning of April. We traveled up and down the state's coastline to meet with tackle shop owners, fishing groups, recreational fishing advocates, members of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Marine Fisheries Division, and everyday anglers from all walks of life.

The goals of the Road Show are to ensure that we're effectively communicating what has been accomplished under MRIP, build a dialogue among partners and stakeholders around the direction the program is headed, and ensure that expectations of all parties are aligned with the on-the-ground realities of resources, needs, and priorities.

In mid-May, MRIP will visit Florida's Atlantic and Gulf coasts to meet with stakeholders. If you would like to participate in one of our meetings or help organize a meeting, please contact Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov.

Calibration Workshop proposes continued re-estimation, calibration factor

Representatives from Councils, Commissions, states, and NOAA Fisheries came together for a Calibration Workshop last month, co-hosted by Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) program. The workshop participants considered developing a method to adjust catch estimates derived from the old Marine Recreational Fishing Statistics Survey (MRFSS) with the more accurate estimates produced using the improved Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) methodology. Managers will then be able to use the recalibrated MRFSS estimates in stock assessments and fisheries management.

Currently, MRFSS catch data is re-estimated as far back as 2004 using the new MRIP methodology. In a consensus document, participants

recommended that NOAA Fisheries should continue to re-estimate catch data prior to 2004 using the MRIP methodology to create as long a time series as possible. For the interim, while NOAA Fisheries re-estimates catch for earlier years, workshop participants decided a catch adjustment factor, or ratio, based on the difference in catch estimates between the old and new methodologies during the years they overlap would be the most appropriate way to reconcile the differences.

The workshop participants concluded that using such an adjustment factor and continuing to re-estimate historic data in most cases would not require a new benchmark assessment or immediate recalculation of current ACLs. Instead, NOAA Fisheries should:

- Monitor catch using the calibration ratio to scale the new MRIP estimates to allow compatibility with the basis for established ACLs;
- Base ACLs on the new MRIP methodology as stock assessments are updated; and
- Update ACLs that are based exclusively on historic catch for data-poor stocks by using a time series that includes new MRIP and calibrated historic catch estimates.

Moving forward, a working group was formed to further develop a more refined technical approach to hind-casting and forecasting catch estimates. The working group will also identify species whose catch estimates are most affected by the transition to MRIP, and provide this list to the northeast and southeast region's stock assessment steering committee to help them decide which species assessments should be prioritized over the coming years. The working group's findings are expected to be released in May.

New report summarizes ongoing work to improve effort surveys

Just as we've done with our catch surveys, MRIP is making improvements to our effort, or trip, surveys. A new report summarizes the results of recently completed MRIP pilot studies and provides recommendations for future testing and implementation of improved effort survey designs.

For the past several years, MRIP has examined ways to improve upon the existing method of random-digit dialing of coastal households, which the National Research Council indicated could suffer from inefficiency, poor response rates, and undercoverage. MRIP researchers confirmed that participation in telephone surveys continues to decline, while their experiments with mail surveys showed promise in improving response rates and overall quality of the data. To ensure complete coverage, researchers drew from two overlapping databases, or sampling frames, of potential anglers - the National and State Saltwater Angler Registries and the U.S. Postal Service's national address database. Dual-frame approaches such as this was one of the recommendations from the National Research Council.

The preliminary results from these pilot projects were encouraging, but limited to the small sample area; further testing is required to validate our findings. As a next step, MRIP will conduct a study that tests a specific effort data collection alternative to produce potentially more efficient and more accurate estimates. More information about this project, Finalize

Design of MRIP Fishing Surveys, is included in the section below on MRIP's approved 2012 projects.

2012 Approved MRIP projects announced; upcoming studies look at effort surveys, evaluating tradeoffs and electronic logbook usage

The Operations Team announced its approved projects for the 2012 proposal cycle. Below are a few examples of the 14 projects that were funded.

- **Finalize Design of MRIP Fishing Surveys** is a project that builds upon previous MRIP pilot studies, to test a dual-frame, mail survey method for collecting information about how many trips anglers are taking and determine its broad scale effectiveness. The project moves us ever closer to a new effort survey design that is scientifically rigorous and statistically sound.
- **MRIP Computer Simulation of Tradeoffs between Timeliness, Precision and Cost** will develop a simulation model to assess tradeoffs between timeliness, precision and cost in producing recreational catch and effort estimates. The second phase of the project will analyze the results of the simulation model to build a decision support tool that will help determine the proper mix of people, places, and times to sample to best meet customer and stakeholder data needs.
- **Survey-Wide Implementation of Electronic Logbook Reporting on Headboats Operating in the U. S. South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico (Phase II)** will expand electronic logbook reporting to all vessels that participate in the Southeast Region Headboat Survey. The project's goal is to increase the timeliness and quality of logbook reporting by headboats in the Southeast region.
- **Several projects improving survey methods on the Pacific coasts** have been funded. These include exploring alternative methods of data collection in Hawaii that address their unique recreational fishing community, developing a new design for shore and estuary-boat surveys in Oregon, and resigning California's methods for surveying anglers at manmade structures and private access sites.

For more information on all of MRIP's pilot projects, please visit <http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov/projects/index.html>.

Coming Soon: A new searchable database of past, current and future MRIP projects.

Ask MRIP

Do you have questions about MRIP or our surveys? Ask us and we'll answer your question in an upcoming newsletter. If you've got a question about MRIP that you'd like answered, please e-mail Leah Sharpe at Leah.Sharpe@noaa.gov.

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