



NEWSCAST

The Newsletter of the Marine Recreational Information Program

**NOAA
FISHERIES**



February 1, 2013

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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.

For More Information:

Leah Sharpe
(301) 427-8205
leah.sharpe@noaa.gov

New Public Access Fishing Site Register launches

On January 24th NOAA Fisheries launched a new comprehensive, online database of public recreational fishing sites on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts (Maine through Louisiana, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii). The Site Register is available at <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/access-data/public-access-fishing-site-register>.

Maintained by NOAA Fisheries in cooperation with our state and regional partners, the Site Register provides detailed information about every publicly accessible fishing site- whether marinas, boat ramps, piers, beaches, or jetties.

NOAA Fisheries created the register as part of our program for gathering catch data. All the characteristics we collect tell us something we need to know about each site - how often people fish during different parts of the year, what types of fishing occur, and what amenities might attract anglers to visit- to ensure that we're getting an accurate picture of all the fishing activity that's taking place. That, in turn, enables us to properly sample the activity and produce representative estimates.

The Site Register is also accessible to the public as a tool for anglers and others. The goal of making the Site Register public is two-fold. It will provide information that individuals or third-party developers may find useful in finding or accessing fishing sites. Equally important, since each fishing site is dynamic, members of the public can contact us directly to provide updated information. Anyone who is interested in learning more about using this information for their own purposes, see information that doesn't look right, or are aware of a fishing site that isn't listed can e-mail SR.Admin@noaa.gov.

Completing the new Public Access Fishing Site Register is an important step in our improved angler catch survey, which will begin in March of this year. To learn more about the new angler catch survey, see the article below.

MRIP rolls out improved angler catch survey

This year, MRIP is changing the way we collect catch information on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts with an improved angler catch survey. The new survey is different from old catch survey in three key ways:

- Samplers will be interviewing anglers during all parts of the day,

including at night.

- Samplers will stay at a specified location for a specified amount of time regardless of the amount of fishing activity.
- Each sampling assignment will include a specific site "cluster," or group of sites with similar characteristics, a specified order in which to visit sites in that cluster, specified times to stay at each site in that cluster, and a single fishing mode to sample for the entire assignment.

The new procedures are based on recommendations made in an independent review of NOAA Fisheries' data collection methods and have been tested in a pilot study. The survey removes potential sources of bias from our survey design and helps improve the precision of our estimates. The survey also ensures the way we collect data complements the way we use it to produce estimates of catch.

There may be instances when our samplers are at a fishing site where there isn't much activity. Similarly, you may see samplers interviewing anglers who obviously haven't caught any fish. We are stressing in our outreach that this is a vital part of the job. We must sample all types of fishing activity in order to see the overall picture of fishing activity.

For more information about the new angler catch survey or the other ways we collect data, please visit www.countryfish.noaa.gov.

Testing of registry-based survey designs for estimating the number of angler fishing trips

MRIP has launched the last of a sequence of pilot studies looking at the most effective way to collect accurate information about the number and types of fishing trips by marine recreational anglers. Building on previous findings, we're homing in on definitive answers to three fundamental questions:

- Can we use the contact information (phone numbers or mailing addresses) provided in available registries or lists of license-holders to reach all fishing participants?
- If not, what other contact lists can be used in combination to give us a way to reach all fishing participants (in what statisticians would call a comprehensive sampling frame)?
- What is the best way to contact anglers to ask them about their fishing activities? Are they more likely to respond to a mail or telephone contact?

Traditionally, NOAA Fisheries has used random-digit dialing (RDD) telephone surveys to contact households in coastal counties with landline telephones and collect recreational fishing effort data. This approach has several shortcomings; the methodology is inefficient at identifying specific groups of people, such as anglers, and it cannot be used to contact people who only use cell phones. From the perspective of estimating recreational fishing activity, the main purpose of state and federal saltwater fishing license and permit programs is to provide an effective way to survey anglers. However, current license and registration databases do not include

all anglers. To ensure we can contact all people who may be fishing, we supplement the license and registration sample frames with lists of households that are available from the U.S. Postal Service.

One surprising finding of our previous work is that - even in our "digital age" - the most effective way to reach recreational anglers has been through the U.S. Mail. The current study will verify whether this holds true, and also help identify the best way to design our surveys so that we get the most responses.

This pilot study will be completed by the end of 2013. We anticipate that beginning in 2014, the MRIP fishing effort survey will incorporate a combination of license/registration and USPS frames, and will be conducted by mail.

To learn more about this project, and any other past, ongoing and future MRIP project, please visit www.countmyfish.noaa.gov.

Improvements to the MRIP project database

The MRIP project database has been updated to have a keyword search on project name and description. We hope this improvement makes it easier for you to find the projects that are of greatest interest to you. The database can be found at <https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mdms/public/public.jsp>.

In the Next Newscast:

Q&A: What role will emerging technologies, like smartphones and tablets, play in fisheries data collection?

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.