



NEWSCAST

The Newsletter of the Marine Recreational Information Program

**NOAA
FISHERIES**



May 9, 2013 IN THIS ISSUE

[Logbook Pilot Study Results](#)

[In the Next Newscast](#)

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

Results from Electronic Logbook Pilot Study Are Now Available

Since its inception, a key priority of MRIP has been to explore new technologies and new methods to gather catch and trip information from the charter for-hire industry. A pilot study was recently completed that tested the feasibility of using electronic logbooks to collect landings and fishing effort data. An MRIP Project Team comprised of partners from Florida, Texas, and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, as well as a group of independent experts, worked alongside for-hire captains to design a pilot program to collect catch and effort data in the Florida Panhandle and Corpus Christi, Texas, during 2010 and 2011. The final project report, which provides results and recommendations for future work, is now available online at www.countmyfish.noaa.gov.

Key project findings include the following:

- A census of for-hire catch and effort was not achieved due to non-responses (both at the individual trip level and at the vessel level) by vessels required to report. Logbook reports in this study were submitted for a large portion of the total fishing effort (approximately 70% overall), but many trips validated during the study were not reported. However, reporting compliance gradually improved over the duration of the pilot study. The Project Team anticipates that trend in compliance would have continued had this pilot study run for a longer period, allowing fishermen to become more familiar with reporting requirements.
- Electronic reporting with built-in quality control features that prevent data entry errors and omissions was an effective method for receiving high-quality self-reported data from a large population of participants. Paper logbooks and electronic reporting options without built-in quality control features required more follow-up with participants to verify and attempt to correct self-reported data. Electronic reporting options that allow users the ability to record and store logbook data at sea facilitate better record-keeping and accurate recall by offering more flexibility for when and how users keep track of trip details and record logbook data.
- Current authority to enforce reporting requirements for federally permitted vessels was effective for determining reporting compliance but was not adequate for achieving timely reporting. Additional enforceable requirements are needed to achieve complete and timely reporting.

- A complete accounting of charter boat catch in a region would require identification of, and participation by, all charter boats. Authority to require and enforce 1 trip reporting for non-federally permitted charter vessels varies by state, and some states may require legislative changes to gain such authority.
- For an ongoing logbook reporting program to remain effective, a consistent and high level of effort by port samplers and law enforcement is required to validate and maintain reporting compliance and timely reporting.
- Participants in the pilot study were required to report weekly, which was sufficient to produce precise catch and effort statistics within the current two-month wave reporting standard. However, requiring daily reporting could be cost-prohibitive due to the increased effort required to track and validate compliance at this higher reporting frequency.
- Comparisons in this study between logbook reports and independent field validations by scientific personnel confirm that self-reported data are subject to recall bias and inaccuracies in reporting; therefore individual logbook trip reports cannot be considered a one-to-one match with independent field validations. However, given an adequate sample size, aggregated logbook data are potentially very useful for developing estimators for total effort, catch-per-unit effort (CPUE), and total harvest at the regional scale. The Project Team initiated a follow-up review of the potential for use of a combination of logbook and dockside validation data to produce an accurate and precise estimate of catch. Methods of estimating cumulative monthly catch and effort during periods of high fishing activity, and bi-monthly catch and effort during periods of low fishing activity are under development.

Several potential benefits from a logbook reporting system were recognized from this study and the Project Team did not rule out logbook reporting as a feasible method for the collection of catch and effort statistics from the for-hire sector. Given adequate resources and long-term funding commitments, this method may be feasible for a large geographic area with a large number of vessels, but may not be feasible for small states or regions with small numbers of vessels.

However, immediate implementation of a logbook requirement for federal permit holders is not likely to achieve a complete and accurate census of catch and effort. Accordingly, MRIP expects to continue to maintain the current surveys, working with our state partners, pending availability of certified data collection alternatives that regional partners wish to implement. Overall, this project demonstrated to MRIP that successfully moving to electronic logbook reporting and/or a for-hire census approach will require several elements:

- Working closely and in partnership with the captains who will use the program;
- Conducting substantial outreach and engagement to ensure support, buy-in, and ongoing participation, and to prioritize data needs with respect to issues such as timeliness, geographic scale, and accuracy;
- Ensuring adequate funding, resources, and the statutory authorities

to ensure compliance and to maintain validation;

- Developing effective methods for identifying eligible vessels, and reporting catch and discards; and
- Having clear commitments among all the regional partners to deliver the resources and authorities necessary to carry out an electronic trip reporting program with the necessary supporting validation, compliance monitoring and enforcement, port and sea sampling, and data reporting and management systems, as recommended by the pilot project report.

MRIP is now discussing the results of this pilot project with our regional partners and determining next steps. Among those will be the development of a method for estimating catch by using logbook data in conjunction with dockside validation data.

In the Next Newscast:

A complete listing of the 2013 projects funded by the MRIP Operations Team and Information Management Team. Until then, information on most of these projects can be found on the [MRIP Project Database](#).

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.