

# NEWSCAST

MARINE  
RECREATIONAL  
INFORMATION  
PROGRAM



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*An update for members and partners of the new Marine Recreational Information Program*

## **SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE SALTWATER ANGLER REGISTRY**

**JUNE 2008**

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#### **NOAA Proposes Rule to Require Saltwater Angler Registration**

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, NOAA Fisheries released a proposed rule on the National Saltwater Angler Registry, a requirement of the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act and an important component of the broader initiative to improve the quality of recreational fishing data.

The national registry of saltwater anglers is the key to closing a major gap in information on recreational fishing. This "phonebook" will improve the efficiency and accuracy of our surveys. It will also help NOAA demonstrate the economic value of saltwater recreational fishing on local and national economies and allow us get a more accurate picture of the level of participation by the American public in saltwater fishing.

Beginning in January 2009, recreational anglers who fish in federal waters are required to be registered each year with NOAA Fisheries Service. The proposed rule also requires registration by those who may catch anadromous species such as salmon, striped bass, and shad that spawn in rivers and streams and spend their adult lives in estuaries and the ocean. Registration will be free for the first two years.

The proposed rule outlines the process NOAA Fisheries will use for registering saltwater recreational anglers. It also addresses the qualifications and procedures for exempting states and their anglers from the federal registration requirement.

Anglers may be exempt from federal registration if they fish in a state that already has a program in place to account for all of its saltwater anglers. The proposed rule outlines possible exemptions for states that have a comprehensive saltwater fishing license or a regional angler survey program approved by NOAA Fisheries. In addition, anglers fishing from licensed for-hire vessels and anglers under the age of 16 are also exempt.

### **Next Steps**

NOAA is accepting public comments on the proposed rule until August 11, 2008. A final rule based on those comments is expected in November 2008 with the requirement going into effect January 1, 2009.

Materials including the press release, fact sheet, and the proposed rule itself are available on [www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov](http://www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov).

## **Commonly Asked Questions about the Proposed Rule**

### **How will an angler registry benefit recreational fishermen?**

The registry will enhance the conservation of our marine fisheries by vastly improving the quality of our data, while at the same time recognizing the important role of saltwater anglers in the decision-making process.

### **Will there be any exemptions from the registry requirement?**

Anglers may be exempt from the Federal registration requirement if they hold a license or registration issued by a state that already has a program in place to account for all its saltwater recreational anglers (e.g. a comprehensive saltwater fishing license or regional angler survey program that gathers the data necessary for the registry).

### **If my state has a saltwater fishing license or regional data program, will I automatically be exempt?**

No. Once the rule is finalized, each state must apply to NOAA Fisheries for an exemption.

### **Will anglers fishing from party or charter boats have to register?**

Under the proposed rule, individuals fishing from a for-hire vessel would be exempt from the registry requirement. This fishing activity is already accounted for in current surveys of party and charter boat fishing.

### **Will there be any costs associated with registering?**

Not initially. However, an annual fee (in the \$15-25 range) may be required beginning in 2011. Any fees collected through the federal registry would not go to NOAA, but rather directly to the U.S. Treasury.

### **Will there be penalties for not registering?**

The Magnuson-Stevens Act generally establishes fines for fishery infractions however, the proposed rule does not specify specific penalty amounts for not registering. NOAA Fisheries will work with the states to develop an appropriate penalty schedule. At the outset, we will focus on raising awareness of the requirements and the registry's benefits to the fishing public.

Have more questions? Please contact Gordon Colvin at [gordon.colvin@noaa.gov](mailto:gordon.colvin@noaa.gov).

## **Media Bites – MRIP in the News**

To mark the release of the proposed rule, NOAA hosted a conference call with more than 20 newspaper and radio reporters on June 11<sup>th</sup>. The call featured comments from Dr. Jim Balsiger, NOAA's acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, and Gordon Colvin, Angler Registry Team Lead. In addition to quotes from these two spokespersons, numerous partners are also prominently featured in many of the articles. Below is a sampling of some of the coverage:

"Ocean fishing for sport faces fee" BOSTON GLOBE

"Oceangoing Anglers May Have to Register" NEW YORK TIMES

"Government wants saltwater anglers to register, pay fee" PRESS OF ATLANTIC CITY

"Angler registry sought to improve fish counts" BALTIMORE SUN

"New federal saltwater license on its way?" CHARLESTON EVENING POST (South Carolina)

“Feds may require dual fishing licenses” BEAUFORT GAZETTE

“Feds want to license saltwater anglers next year” KENNEBEC JOURNAL

“Federal fishing license proposed” DELAWARE NEWS JOURNAL

“Federal fishing registration system adopted in Hawai‘i” HONOLULU ADVERTISER

“Federal government to enact recreational fishing fee” DAILY NEWS OF NEWBURYPORT  
(Massachusetts)

“Register to fish in federal waters” ASSOCIATED PRESS

See an article about MRIP in the news? Please share it with us by contacting Forbes Darby at [forbes.darby@noaa.gov](mailto:forbes.darby@noaa.gov).

## Upcoming Events

Members of the Executive Steering Committee, teams, and work groups are hitting the road each month to brief partners and constituents about the Marine Recreational Information Program initiative. Below are only a few of the meetings and events.

### June Events

- Alaska Region Listening Session
- Caribbean Region Listening Session
- Fishery Management Council Meetings (Gulf, New England, South Atlantic, North Pacific, Western Pacific)
- Southern New England Chapter of AFS
- Massachusetts Striped Bass Association

### July Events

- Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
- Plum Island Surfcasters

Click [www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov](http://www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov) for a complete schedule of upcoming briefings. If you're interested in inviting a representative of the initiative to provide a briefing to your organization, please contact Forbes Darby.

*Newscast updates are e-mailed monthly to NOAA Fisheries, state natural resource agencies, marine fisheries commissions, fishery management councils and members of the sportfishing community with an interest in the initiative to improve saltwater recreational fishing information. For more information, contact Forbes Darby at [forbes.darby@noaa.gov](mailto:forbes.darby@noaa.gov) or by phone at (301) 713-9501.*