



# 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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### For More Information:

**Leah Sharpe**  
(301) 427-8205  
[leah.sharpe@noaa.gov](mailto:leah.sharpe@noaa.gov)

## Analysis of catch estimates produced using new MRIP methodology

MRIP is evaluating new catch estimates calculated using an improved, peer-reviewed methodology developed in consultation with a team of NOAA and external experts. The new estimation method - which will produce revised estimates of catch dating back to 2004 - will yield more accurate estimates by eliminating numerous sources of potential bias in three main ways:

1. By aligning the statistical formulas we use to calculate catch estimates with the way in which we have collected catch data in the field;
2. By appropriately weighting data to account for sampler discretion in surveying alternate sites; and
3. By dropping alternate mode data chosen at samplers' discretion, which cannot be properly weighted.

NOAA scientists are carefully evaluating the new preliminary estimates to provide an in-depth analysis of the numbers and gain a better understanding of their implications. Over the next several weeks, the MRIP team will:

- Conduct a parallel evaluation of new MRIP estimates and MRFSS estimates to ensure we fully understand the differences;
- Perform quality checks of the results from the new method, the computer programming and coding we have developed to implement the method, and the historic data upon which re-estimates dating back to 2004 will be developed; and
- Work with stakeholders to weigh the implications of the data and consider the most effective ways to incorporate the new estimates into ongoing and upcoming stock assessment and management processes.

We will continue to provide updates on our progress and milestones along the way. In the meantime, NOAA will continue to produce preliminary wave estimates using the current MRFSS method. Final 2010 MRFSS estimates, as well as preliminary wave 1 and 2 estimates based on the MRFSS method, are currently online at:

<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/queries/index.html>

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## Enhanced survey design will improve how catch data are collected

Along with using improved methods to make catch estimates based on existing data, we are also working to improve the way we gather that data in the first place. Improvements that we're focusing on include:

- To avoid sampling only during peak periods, sampling completed fishing trips during all times of the day by conducting surveys during four predetermined six-hour time blocks.
- Asking each sampler to conduct interviews at a specific cluster of sites in a specific randomized order to eliminate the need for sampler discretion, a potential source for bias in the current intercept survey.
- Maximizing the number of sites we visit - and sampling everyone at those sites during a specific time period - to ensure we're getting a more complete picture of fishing activity.

These and other improvements are being pilot tested in cooperation with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. A final report from the project team is expected this fall. Looking ahead, we are already engaging with state partners, constituents, and stakeholders to determine how recommendations for improvement can be implemented quickly, efficiently, and cost-effectively.

For more information, check out our video on "Addressing Bias" at [www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov](http://www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov). There's also code to embed this video into your own website if you feel your visitors would find it informative.

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## Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission voices support for MRIP

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) affirmed its strong support for the direction, pace, and goals of MRIP during the Commission's August summer meeting. ASMFC explained that its support was the result of consistent and frequent updates on the program's progress as well as a reflection of the active participation of the ASMFC, other interstate commissions, and the coastal states at all levels of MRIP development, including committees and technical working groups. To read the full statement from ASMFC, please visit [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org) and click on the August 3, 2011 press release.

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## Updating stakeholders on progress

MRIP staff has provided MRIP status updates to a number of key stakeholders in recent weeks, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's policy board, Fishery Management Council chairs and executive directors, Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program staff and committee leadership, and NOAA Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee's Recreational Fishing Working Group, among others.

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## Looking ahead...

- The Gulf of Mexico for-hire electronic reporting pilot project will wrap up its year-long study this month. Look for results and a final report in 2012.
- In cooperation with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, NOAA Fisheries will host a workshop on volunteer angler surveys later this year.
- Later this summer NOAA Fisheries will launch an enhanced online query system for catch and effort estimates.
- The Communications and Education Team will be conducting update and next steps briefings throughout the fall, winter, and spring. For information on scheduling a briefing for your members, constituents, or stakeholders, contact [Forbes.Darby@noaa.gov](mailto:Forbes.Darby@noaa.gov).

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## 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](mailto:Leah.Sharpe@noaa.gov).