



NEWSCAST

The Newsletter of the Marine Recreational Information Program

**NOAA
FISHERIES**



August 6, 2012

IN THIS ISSUE

[Ask MRIP](#)

[Why haven't I ever been surveyed?](#)

[How do you know the fishing activity of the people you sample is anything like mine?](#)

[Why don't you just survey anglers who fish a lot and catch most of the fish?](#)

[Do you gather information from fishing tournaments?](#)

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

Ask MRIP - You asked, we answered!

This MRIP Newscast is a bit different from our usual Newscasts. This summer the MRIP team has been doing a series of road shows in New Jersey, Florida, and, later this summer, in the Northeast. The goal of these road shows has been to talk to anglers about the MRIP program - explaining the changes that have already occurred, giving a preview into the changes that will be implemented in the future, and answering their questions. The questions below were the most frequently asked during our recent conversations with anglers. As such, we thought the questions and MRIP's responses would be of interest to Newscast readers. If you have any questions, please send them to Leah Sharpe at leah.sharpe@noaa.gov and we will answer them by email or in an upcoming Newscast.

Why haven't I ever been surveyed?

Although we contact thousands of fishermen each year through our phone and shore-side sampling, you may never be interviewed. Since we cannot talk to each of America's 12 million marine recreational anglers, we randomly sample anglers to estimate the activity of the whole community. While we can't count every fish that is caught, our estimates are an accurate snapshot of what's happening on the water. These same principles are used every day to do things like produce television ratings or predict the outcomes of presidential elections.

How do you know the fishing activity of the people you sample is anything like mine?

Just like TV ratings and presidential polls, we know that accurate estimates of large groups can come from relatively small, scientifically-chosen samples. Sampling is based on mathematical probability theory, which may sound complex, but the basic concept really isn't. George Gallup, founder of the famous Gallup Poll, once described sampling with this simple analogy: he said sampling a population was like taste-testing soup -- one spoonful can reflect the taste of the whole bowl, if the soup is well stirred. In other words, a sample can accurately reflect an entire population as long as the sample is representative of the whole. When it comes to surveying saltwater anglers, we randomly select fishing sites in proportion to their expected fishing activity and send personnel there to interview anglers about their catches. This broad representation is what "stirs the soup" and means that even though you may never get surveyed, we're still counting your catch.

Why don't you just survey anglers who fish a lot and catch most of the fish?

Focusing on the anglers who fish a lot and catch the most fish would be a way to get a lot of information quickly, but lots of data is not the same thing as representative data. If we only surveyed anglers who catch lots of fish, we wouldn't have good representation of all anglers, and as a result, we'd be over-estimating the total catch.

Do you gather information from fishing tournaments?

We have not sampled at fishing tournaments with the exception of billfish, tuna, and shark tournaments, where we have specialized data collection methods for these species. This will change in 2013 when catch from all tournaments will be eligible to be sampled as part of our new shore-side survey.

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.