



NEWSCAST

The Newsletter of the Marine Recreational Information Program

**NOAA
FISHERIES**



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IN THIS ISSUE

[Meet Your Samplers](#)

[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.

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Meet the MRIP Samplers at the End of Your Dock

Every day, highly trained MRIP field samplers go out and talk to recreational fishermen to find out what they're fishing for, what they're catching, and where and when they're catching it. This information is one of the cornerstones of the fisheries data needed by scientists, managers and stakeholders to ensure that our oceans are sustainable sources of food, commerce and recreation for generations to come.

Pamela Rusher and Travis Williams are North Carolina samplers who sat down to tell us about their work and why it matters.

How and why did you get involved with this line of work?

RUSHER: I have an Associate's degree in marine technology, and I spent my whole high school in an oceanography program. I'm an avid recreational angler, so I know the area well. I had many careers, but they were never as fulfilling. Working with the resources is my passion. I feel that I am helping to keep the resource sustainable for everyone to enjoy for years to come.

WILLIAMS: As a kid, I was a pretty avid fisherman. I always wanted to pursue this type of job, so I held a few jobs that had some similar qualities. I used to work on a head boat, where I got to see quite a few different species of fish.

I've lived in North Carolina since 1997, and I've seen just about all the fish that anglers catch around here. I went to school and got a marine biology degree. I saw an opening with the North Carolina Marine Fisheries. They were offering a job where I could be out in the field, and talk to people who were fishing every day.

What is a typical work day like for you and who do you talk to?

WILLIAMS: When you show up on site the first thing you want to do is make sure you fill out your assignment summary form. You'll fill in the time you arrived on the site and information you collect throughout your stay at the site. Having all these specifics is very important to all the people down the line who will be calculating and interpreting our raw data; converting it into estimates and ultimately using it to manage fisheries.

RUSHER: Anglers come from all walks of life. They're young, they're old. They come here for the first time, they fish avidly. They're excited about what

they do and they love fishing. They're very easy to talk to. This is what we do 365 days a year, because fishing never stops.

WILLIAMS: One thing we stress with everybody is we're not there to enforce the laws. We're there to collect data, and see what's actually happening in the fishery. So you want to place yourself somewhere where you will be able to see, and where you'll be able to safely and effectively approach anglers when they're done for the day, and gather information about their fishing trip.

All anglers need to be sampled. Even if they're not carrying a stringer with them, or what looks like a weighed down cooler, you still want to try to speak to them, because all information is valuable. Scientists use this data to determine what folks are catching based on how long they fish. Data from somebody fishing for four hours and not catching anything is just as valuable as data from somebody fishing for four hours and catching a boatload of fish.

MRIP changed its protocol recently on how you collect data. How have those changes affected your work?

RUSHER: One of the differences is that we are required to go to the site that is scheduled, and we are to remain there for a specified amount of time until we go to the next site. Before, we had the option to go to a site that was closest to the one we were sampling to see if there was any pressure there. We had flexibility to look for anglers, and now that's all determined ahead of time so the statisticians have better information to work with. Now we sample all day, all night. Night sampling is new in this sampling method.

WILLIAMS: We're given specific time periods where we have to be on site. We used to be given the same site assignments, but we'd try to get there at peak times. With the new MRIP program we don't just go during peak times. This gives the scientists more information about what's actually going on. We don't get biased data, or we get less biased data than we used to.

Why is what you do important?

WILLIAMS: Fishing's important in North Carolina because it's our heritage. People have always fished in North Carolina, and it's important that we try and maintain the fishery for everyone. We need to have information about recreational fisheries so that we can manage them properly and we can ensure that there are enough fish for everybody in the future.

What do you like about your job?

RUSHER: Everything.

In the Next Newscast:

Learn what MRIP is doing to ensure a smooth transition to potential changes in catch and effort estimates resulting from implementation of improved survey methods.

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.