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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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Increased Registry Fee for Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Hawaii

Beginning January 1, 2016, the annual fee for the [National Saltwater Angler Registry](#) will increase from \$25 to \$29. Persons who register on or after the first of the year will need to pay the new fee, except for indigenous people who must register, but are not required to pay the fee, per the provisions of 50 CFR 600.1410(f). Persons who fish on a licensed charter boat, are 16 years-old or younger, or hold a valid saltwater fishing license or registration – issued by any [Exempted State](#) – are not required to register with NOAA Fisheries. Also, persons who are residents of an Exempted State, but are not required to hold that state's saltwater fishing license, do not need to register with NOAA Fisheries.

To date, all coastal states and territories, except Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands, are designated as Exempted States. The Exempted States have entered into formal agreements with NOAA Fisheries to provide lists of their licensed anglers and for-hire vessel operators (Atlantic and Gulf coast states) or catch and effort data via a regional data collection program (Pacific coast states and Island territories). This information helps us better meet the recreational catch and effort data collection needs of our fishery management and stock assessment programs. In particular, the timely submission of angler registry data by the states supports the Marine Recreational Information Program's new mail-based Fishing Effort Survey.

We greatly appreciate our data collection partnerships with the states and their efforts to provide the information necessary to assure the effectiveness of MRIP.

NOAA Fisheries recently completed its required biennial review of the registry fee to ensure that it is set at the correct level to recover the cost of administering the registry program. The review noted that the number of federal registrations has declined considerably over the past several years, due to the large number of Exempted States.

As part of this process, the agency assessed the registration options and costs. We determined that maintaining the current telephone and internet registration opportunities for the low number of current registrants would result in a much higher annual registration fee. Consequently, we decided to terminate the telephone call center and register anglers exclusively online

at www.countmyfish.noaa.gov/register. Doing so allows us to keep the fee increase to less than \$5 per registrant.

Adoption of New Policy and Procedural Directives

Earlier this month, the agency adopted a [Policy Directive](#) to ensure a smooth shift to new and improved recreational catch and effort surveys.

The directive formalizes a Transition Planning and execution process whenever we switch from one survey method to another, while taking the necessary time and effort to effectively incorporate new estimates into the science and management processes. It recognizes that changes to data collection designs could result in catch estimates that are inconsistent with (i.e., consistently higher or lower than) estimates derived from earlier survey designs. The Policy Directive also states that, until such a Transition Plan is approved and implemented, the statistics resulting from use of the modified survey methods should not be treated as best scientific information available for use in fishery stock assessments and management actions.

A [Procedural Directive](#) was issued along with the Policy Directive to ensure effective implementation. It provides guidance for developing Transition Plans that account for consistently higher or lower statistical estimates of catch or effort resulting from implementation of new sampling or estimation 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.

To learn more about improvements MRIP is making, visit our website at www.countmyfish.noaa.gov.