DATA COLLECTION

Detailed information on marine recreational fishing is required to support a variety of fishery management purposes and is mandated by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 (PL 104-297) and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 (PL 109-479). In 1981, following 2 years of preliminary surveys, the NMFS began a comprehensive survey of marine recreational fisheries covering all fishing modes (private/rental boat, party/charter boat, and shore) and including estuarine and brackish water. Although the annual recreational harvest makes up only about 8 percent of the total U.S. harvest of finfish for states covered by this program, it is important to monitor the fishing activities of millions of anglers. Marine recreational fishing significantly impacts the stocks of many finfish species, and recreational catches surpass commercial landings of some species (see pages 20-21).

METHODS

On the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States, the marine recreational fisheries statistics program consists of a coastal household telephone survey (CHTS); a telephone survey of for-hire fishing vessel operators (FHS; charter and party boats); and an access-point angler-intercept survey of completed angler fishing trips (APAIS). Additional information is obtained from state or regional logbook programs and supplements survey data to produce more robust catch and effort estimates. The CHTS collects data on the number of marine recreational fishing trips by residents of coastal counties. The intercept survey collects data on species composition of catches, catch rates by species, lengths and weights of landed fish, the proportion of fishing trips by residents of non-coastal counties, and angler avidity. These data are combined to produce estimates of participation, catch, and effort. Catch estimates are separated into two categories—harvested catch and catch released alive. Harvested catch includes landed fish and catch reported as dead. Whenever possible, field interviewers identify, count, weigh, and measure landed fish that are available in whole form. Angler reports are obtained for catch released alive and for all other harvested catch, such as catch released dead or used for bait, or filleted fish. Catch estimates are stratified by sub-region, state, and wave (bimonthly sampling period). Estimates are further partitioned by species, fishing mode (private/rental boat, party/charter boat, and shore), primary area fished, and catch type.

On the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and in California, effort for the party and charter boat fishing modes is estimated through For-Hire Surveys (FHS). These surveys differ from the CHTS because they use a telephone survey of boats as the primary method for estimating fishing effort. The weekly surveys use directories of charter and party boats as the sampling frames. These telephone surveys estimate the number of angler trips on boats included in the sampling frames. Dockside and on-board angler-intercept surveys collect catch data. The total catch of any one species is calculated as the product of the estimated total angler trips and the estimated mean catch per trip. Although the FHS produces separate estimates for party and charter boats on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, for-hire fishing vessels are not designated by type in California or Puget Sound. The FHS effort methodology was initiated in 2000 on the Gulf coast, in 2001 on the Pacific coast, and in 2005 on the Atlantic coast. FHS numbers for the Gulf Coast include only charter boats.

In Oregon and Washington, ocean boat surveys are used to produce catch and effort estimates. Oregon’s Ocean Recreational Boat Survey (ORBS) and Washington’s Ocean Sampling Program (OSP) consist of a field-intercept survey for effort and catch of passenger and private boats. Estimates of mean catch per boat, catch per angler, total angler trips, and boat trips are produced for each port inlet or port group stratified by time period and portioned by type of boat, type of trip, and water area. Catch estimates in numbers of fish and weight are produced for each species of fish.

COVERAGE

In 2015, the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) conducted by the NMFS included the Atlantic coast (ME-East FL), Gulf coast (MS-West FL), Puerto Rico, and Hawaii. Detailed information and access to the data are available on the Fisheries Statistics web page (www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries). Care is advised when comparing catch estimates across an extended time series because of differences in sampling coverage through the years.
In the South Atlantic and Gulf sub-regions (NC-LA), party boat catch data have not been collected since 1985, so estimates for these sub-regions include charter boats in the for-hire sector only. Since 2014, marine recreational fishing in Louisiana has been monitored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; prior years were surveyed by the NMFS survey program. Marine recreational fishing in Texas is monitored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and has not been surveyed by the NMFS survey program since 1985. Prior to 1998, ocean boat trips and salmon trips on the Pacific coast were not sampled during certain waves because they were surveyed by state natural resource agencies. Recreational fishing data in Alaska are collected through an annual mail survey administered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Harvest, effort, and participation data are included but are not available for the current year. West Pacific U.S. territories have not been included in the national survey program since 1981. Hawaii was not surveyed between 1981 and 2002, and Puerto Rico was not surveyed between 1981 and 2000. Since 2004, the numbers reported for Washington and Oregon include only private boat and for-hire fisheries. Data from other NMFS and state surveys are not included in this report.

Historically, only about 5 percent of the annual recreational catch on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts is taken during Wave 1 (Jan/Feb). Costs to sample these months are very high due to low fishing activity. Therefore, in Jan/Feb of 1981 the surveys were not conducted in any region. In 1982, Jan/Feb data collection resumed on the Pacific and Gulf coasts and also on the Atlantic coast of Florida. In 2004, Jan/Feb data collection resumed in North Carolina. With a few exceptions, the recreational statistics program has not collected data in Jan/Feb on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts north of Florida since 1980. A pilot study of fishing effort in Jan/Feb by coastal household residents (CHTS) was conducted in 2010 in NY, NJ, DE, MD, and VA. Results suggested only about 0.1 to 1.3 percent of coastal households reported fishing in Jan/Feb in these Mid-Atlantic states, compared to the average fishing household rates of 1.25 to 4.5 percent in Mar/Apr and Nov/Dec (2007-2009 pooled), the two lowest periods of activity that are surveyed by the CHTS regularly. These extremely low levels of fishing incidence in Wave 1 are therefore difficult to survey precisely and suggest very low contribution to annual catches if the anglers are successful.

Periods when the marine recreational statistics program has not been conducted include:

- Nov/Dec (ME & NH) – 1987 to present
- Mar/Apr (ME & NH) – 1986 to present
- Jan/Feb (Northern CA & OR) – 1994
- Jan/Feb (Southern CA & OR) – 1995
- July - Dec (OR shore modes) – 2003
- All Waves (CA- WA) – 1990 to 1993, 2004 to present

**CATCH AND EFFORT ESTIMATION**

The MRIP produced a new method for estimating catch rates using properly weighted intercept data collected via the APAIS. This new method was determined to produce superior, unbiased catch rate estimates compared to the existing procedures and has been used for all catch estimates since 2011. The method also produces unbiased adjustment factors for out-of-frame anglers who are not covered by the CHTS, resulting in improved effort estimates. The resulting catch estimates are therefore unbiased estimates for finfish catch, including descriptors such as average weight of landed fish and length frequencies of landed fish. This new technique has also been applied to the previously collected intercept data from 2004 to 2010 to produce revised, unbiased effort and catch estimates. The data tables produced in this volume prior to 2012 are the products of this new estimation method.

**DATA TABLES**

The estimated harvests (numbers and weight of fish) for the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico are presented. Harvest by weight data are not available for Texas and Alaska or for Louisiana after 2013. Numbers of fish harvested and released alive are presented for many important species groups. Estimated harvests are presented by sub-region and primary fishing area: inland (sounds, rivers, bays); state territorial seas (ocean to 3 miles from shore, except for Texas and Florida’s Gulf coast, where state territorial seas extend to 10 miles from shore); and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (ocean from the...
outer edge of the state territorial seas to 200 miles from shore). The total numbers of estimated trips and participants are presented by state.

**2015 MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING DATA**

The 2015 national estimate of marine recreational anglers of 8.9 million was derived from two sources: 1) an estimate based on a peer-reviewed method for the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, from Maine to Mississippi, and 2) estimates of the number of anglers for California, Oregon and Washington (since 2003) and Louisiana (since 2014) based on historical rates of participation in recreational saltwater fishing. Hawaii and Puerto Rico lack historical data adequate to estimate and are not included. NOAA fisheries has a growing concern and lack of confidence in that second portion of the total estimate that depends on using historical participation rates to provide current estimates, especially over a long time frame. NOAA Fisheries will continue to provide that portion of the national estimate described in 1) above, and will work with its state partners to explore ways to improve annual estimates of marine recreational angler participation rather than continuing to use the source described in 2) above.

These 8.9 million marine recreational anglers made nearly 61 million marine recreational fishing trips in the continental United States, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Alaska data are not available for the current year. The estimated total marine recreational catch was more than 351 million fish, of which 57 percent were released alive. The estimated total weight of harvested catch was 188 million pounds. The Atlantic Coast accounted for the majority of trips (nearly 56 percent) and catch (almost 54 percent). The Gulf Coast accounted for 34 percent of trips and almost 41 percent of the catch, while the Pacific Coast accounted for almost 7 percent of trips and 4 percent of the catch. Nationally, most of the recreational catch came from inland waters (55 percent in numbers of fish), with 33 percent from state territorial seas and almost 10 percent from the EEZ. The majority of Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific trips fished primarily in inland waters.

**ATLANTIC**

In 2015, over 5.2 million residents of Atlantic Coast states participated in marine recreational fishing. All participants, including visitors, took 34 million trips and caught a total of more than 188 million fish. More than 25 percent of the trips were made in East Florida, followed by almost 14 percent in North Carolina, almost 13 percent in New Jersey, almost 10 percent in New York, nearly 8 percent in South Carolina, nearly 7 percent in Maryland, and more than 6 percent in Massachusetts. Together, Virginia, Connecticut, and Rhode Island accounted for almost 13 percent of the trips; Georgia, Delaware, Maine, and New Hampshire accounted for the remaining percentages. The most commonly caught non-bait species (in numbers of fish) were Atlantic croaker, black sea bass, summer flounder, bluefish, and striped bass. The largest harvests by weight were striped bass, bluefish, dolphinfish, summer flounder, and scup.

From 2006 to 2015, total annual catch of Atlantic croaker averaged almost 19 million fish. Catch decreased overall from 21 million fish in 2006 to more than 13 million fish in 2015. More than 57 percent of the total catch in 2015 (over 13 million fish) were released alive. Annual black sea bass catch increased overall from almost 11 million fish (2006) to nearly 13 million fish (2015). At 12.9 million fish, 2015 black sea bass catch was just above the 10-year mean of 12.7 million. The species most commonly caught on Atlantic Coast trips that fished primarily in federally managed waters were black sea bass, summer flounder, dolphinfish, Atlantic mackerel, and haddock. More than 29 percent of the total Atlantic catch came on saltwater trips that fished primarily in the state territorial seas, and 61 percent came on trips that fished primarily in inland waters.

**GULF OF MEXICO**

In 2015, nearly 2.7 million residents of Gulf Coast states (not including Louisiana) participated in marine recreational fishing. All participants, including visitors, took nearly 21 million trips and caught almost 143 million fish. Almost 65 percent of the trips were made in West Florida, followed by almost 12 percent in Louisiana, 11 percent in Alabama, more than 7 percent in Mississippi, and 5 percent in Texas. The most commonly caught non-bait species (numbers of fish) were spotted seatrout, gray snapper, red drum, blue runner, and sand seatrout. The largest harvests by weight were for spotted seatrout, red drum, red snapper, king mackerel, sheepshead, and dolphinfish.
From 2006 to 2015, total annual catch of red snapper has averaged nearly 2.9 million fish. Catch decreased overall from 3.9 million fish in 2006 to almost 2.4 million fish in 2015. Of the total catch in 2015 (almost 2.4 million fish), almost 66 percent were released alive. Annual catch of spotted seatrout has varied between nearly 15 million fish and 36 million fish over the last 10 years, with an average catch of 29 million fish per year. Of the nearly 17 million spotted seatrout caught in 2015, almost 9.1 million fish (almost 54%) were released alive. The species most commonly caught on Gulf of Mexico trips that fished primarily in federally managed waters were red snapper, red grouper, white grunt, dolphinfish, and yellowtail snapper. About 33 percent of the total Gulf catch came on trips that fished primarily in the state territorial seas, and almost 53 percent came on trips that fished primarily in inland waters.

PACIFIC

In 2015, marine recreational anglers took 4 million trips and caught a total of over 14 million fish. Almost 92 percent of the trips were made in California, followed by 5 percent in Oregon and more than 3 percent in Washington. The most commonly caught non-bait species (in numbers of fish) were barred surfperch, black rockfish, kelp bass, lingcod, and blue rockfish. By weight, the largest harvests were lingcod, black rockfish, yellowfin tuna, albacore, yellowtail, and vermilion rockfish.

Annual California halibut catch declined to a low in 2011 but has since increased. At 117,000 fish, California halibut catch in 2015 was below the 10-year mean of nearly 210,000. Annual catch of Chinook salmon has varied between 12,000 fish and 180,000 fish over the last 10 years, with an average catch of nearly 108,000 fish per year. Of the 12,000 Chinook salmon caught in 2015, almost 17 percent (2,000 fish) were released alive. The most commonly caught Pacific coast species in federally managed waters were California scorpionfish, vermilion rockfish, yellowfin tuna, squarespot rockfish, and yellowtail. Nearly 71 percent of the total Pacific catch came from trips that fished primarily in the state territorial seas, and 12 percent came from trips that fished primarily in inland waters.

ALASKA

In 2014, 301,000 marine recreational anglers took more than 583,000 trips and caught a total of nearly 2.3 million fish. Commonly caught non-bait species included Pacific halibut, rockfishes, Pacific cod, lingcod, and the salmons: Chinook, chum, coho, pink, and sockeye. The most abundantly harvested of the salmons were coho salmon and Chinook salmon. Current year statistics are not available.

HAWAII

In 2015, marine recreational anglers took 1.4 million trips and caught a total of nearly 5.2 million fish. The most commonly caught non-bait species (in numbers of fish) were yellowstripe goatfish, bluefin trevally, yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna, and yellowfin goatfish. By weight, the largest harvests were yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna, dolphinfish, wahoo, giant trevally, and yellowfin goatfish.

PUERTO RICO

In 2015, marine recreational anglers took almost 668,000 trips and caught a total of 953,000 fish. The most commonly caught non-bait species (in numbers of fish) were great barracuda, tilapia genus, blue runner, dolphinfish, and yellowtail snapper. By weight, the largest harvests were dolphinfish, wahoo, great barracuda, mutton snapper, blue runner, and crevalle jack.
## U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST, BY SPECIES, 2014 AND 2015

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**U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST, BY SPECIES, 2014 AND 2015**

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NOTES: Harvest shown represents Type A+B1 catch. Type A catch are fish brought back to the dock in a form that can be identified by trained interviewers. Type B1 catch are fish that are used for bait, released dead, or filleted; identification is by individual anglers.

(1) Number or pounds less than 1,000 or less than 1 metric ton.
(2) Texas estimates only the number harvested (no weight data) and only private and for-hire fisheries are included.
(3) Louisiana (2014) harvest is estimated by numbers only (no weight).
(4) Alaska data not available for current year.

** Fish included in these groups are not equivalent to those with similar names listed in the commercial tables.
# U.S. Recreational Harvest, by Distance from Shore and Species Group, 2015

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continued
### U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST, BY DISTANCE FROM SHORE AND SPECIES GROUP, 2015

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## U.S. Recreational Harvest, by Distance from Shore and Species Group, 2015

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## U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST, BY DISTANCE FROM SHORE AND SPECIES GROUP, 2015

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## U.S. Recreational Harvest, by Distance from Shore and Species Group, 2015

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## U.S. Recreational Harvest, by Distance from Shore and Species Group, 2015

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| ** Fish included in these groups are not equivalent to those with similar names listed in the commercial tables.**

### Notes:
- Harvest shown represents Type A+B1 catch. Type A catch are fish brought back to the dock in a form that can be identified by trained interviewers. Type B1 catch are fish that are used for bait, released dead, or filleted; identification is by individual anglers.
- (1) Number or pounds less than 1,000 or less than 1 metric ton.
- (2) West Florida state territorial seas extend 0 to 10 miles.
- (3) Includes all Oregon and Washington harvest (where distance from shore is unknown).
- (4) Louisiana harvest is estimated by numbers only (no weight), includes harvest from inland and state territorial seas.
- (5) Alaska data not available for current year.
- (6) Texas estimates only the number harvested (no weight data) and only private and for-hire fisheries are included.
- ** Fish included in these groups are not equivalent to those with similar names listed in the commercial tables.
### U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST AND TOTAL LIVE RELEASES, BY SPECIES GROUP, 2006-2015

| Year | Barracudas | | | Bluefish | | | |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|      | Pounds Harvested (thousands) | Number Harvested (thousands) | Number Released (thousands) | Pounds Harvested (thousands) | Number Harvested (thousands) | Number Released (thousands) |
| 2006 | 1,177       | 177         | 275         | 17,029      | 7,284        | 13,633       |
| 2007 | 1,618       | 270         | 464         | 22,064      | 8,619        | 16,123       |
| 2008 | 1,322       | 208         | 456         | 20,107      | 6,845        | 14,001       |
| 2009 | 1,395       | 198         | 386         | 14,791      | 5,388        | 9,077        |
| 2010 | 874         | 149         | 319         | 16,630      | 6,244        | 10,488       |
| 2011 | 703         | 123         | 213         | 11,720      | 6,845        | 4,875        |
| 2012 | 844         | 166         | 283         | 12,038      | 5,640        | 9,121        |
| 2013 | 749         | 133         | 302         | 16,889      | 6,018        | 9,411        |
| 2014 | 999         | 217         | 314         | 10,831      | 6,094        | 11,098       |
| 2015 | 1,187       | 213         | 409         | 11,792      | 4,153        | 7,149        |

| Year | Cartilaginous Fishes | | | Catfishes | | | |
|------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|      | Pounds Harvested (thousands) | Number Harvested (thousands) | Number Released (thousands) | Pounds Harvested (thousands) | Number Harvested (thousands) | Number Released (thousands) |
| 2006 | 5,383                | 423         | 13,471      | 1,437       | 781         | 12,485       |
| 2007 | 4,866                | 496         | 12,816      | 2,232       | 1,095       | 12,516       |
| 2008 | 2,634                | 330         | 12,363      | 1,640       | 890         | 12,556       |
| 2009 | 4,131                | 308         | 11,295      | 1,277       | 672         | 10,487       |
| 2010 | 2,210                | 289         | 9,587       | 1,899       | 980         | 15,229       |
| 2011 | 1,263                | 280         | 8,465       | 2,276       | 1,065       | 13,939       |
| 2012 | 1,357                | 231         | 9,229       | 2,634       | 1,744       | 13,729       |
| 2013 | 4,808                | 380         | 11,446      | 2,704       | 1,307       | 17,020       |
| 2014 | 3,530                | 319         | 11,002      | 2,872       | 1,082       | 9,131        |
| 2015 | 7,858                | 264         | 8,707       | 2,450       | 1,350       | 9,992        |

| Year | Cods and Hakes | | | Dolphinfishes | | | |
|------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
|      | Pounds Harvested (thousands) | Number Harvested (thousands) | Number Released (thousands) | Pounds Harvested (thousands) | Number Harvested (thousands) | Number Released (thousands) |
| 2006 | 4,558         | 956         | 1,088       | 15,903        | 1,736       | 332         |
| 2007 | 5,502         | 1,045       | 1,286       | 15,205        | 1,603       | 641         |
| 2008 | 6,987         | 1,238       | 1,480       | 14,171        | 1,704       | 500         |
| 2009 | 6,326         | 1,144       | 1,164       | 12,290        | 1,302       | 166         |
| 2010 | 7,897         | 1,333       | 1,551       | 9,900         | 1,241       | 242         |
| 2011 | 8,325         | 1,453       | 1,452       | 9,431         | 1,412       | 467         |
| 2012 | 3,573         | 858         | 1,143       | 11,160        | 1,418       | 225         |
| 2013 | 4,674         | 1,380       | 2,237       | 8,836         | 1,262       | 1,542       |
| 2014 | 3,537         | 1,117       | 2,281       | 9,177         | 1,217       | 557         |
| 2015 | 1,837         | 580         | 1,767       | 13,026        | 1,796       | 673         |

See notes at end of table.  
continued
### U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST AND TOTAL LIVE RELEASES, BY SPECIES GROUP, 2006-2015

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### U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST AND TOTAL LIVE RELEASES, BY SPECIES GROUP, 2006-2015

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See notes at end of table. continued

48 FUS 2015
## U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST AND TOTAL LIVE RELEASES, BY SPECIES GROUP, 2006-2015

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See notes at end of table.
### U.S. RECREATIONAL HARVEST AND TOTAL LIVE RELEASES, BY SPECIES GROUP, 2006-2015

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<th>Wrasses</th>
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Note: Harvest shown represents type A+B1 catch. Type A catch are fish brought back to the dock in a form that can be identified by trained interviewers. Type B1 catch are fish that are used for bait, released dead, or filleted, identification is by individual anglers. Live Releases are type B2, fish that are caught and released alive, identification is by individual anglers.

(1) Number or pounds less than 1,000 or less than 1 metric ton.

TX only estimates harvest (no weight or release data) and includes only private and for-hire fisheries. AK data not available for current year.
### U.S. RECREATIONAL FINFISH HARVESTED AND RELEASED, 2014 AND 2015

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Note: Harvest shown represents Type A+B1 catch. Type A catch are fish brought back to the dock in a form that can be identified by trained interviewers. Type B1 catch are fish that are used for bait, released dead, or filleted; identification is by individual anglers. Live releases are type B2, fish that are caught and released alive; identification is by individual anglers.

(1)TX estimates only number harvested (no weight or release data) and only private and for-hire fisheries are included.
(2) Louisiana (2014) estimates harvest only (no weight or release data).
(3) OR and WA estimates include only private and for-hire fisheries.
(4) AK data not available for current year.
<table>
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<th>2014 Out-of-State Anglers</th>
<th>In-State Anglers</th>
<th>Number of Angler Trips</th>
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**State** | **2015 Out-of-State Anglers** | In-State Anglers | **Number of Angler Trips** |
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**NOTE:** (1) All counties in Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware and Florida are considered coastal. (2) Alaska estimates are presented as coastal, current year data not available. (3) Hawaii, Texas, California, Oregon, and Washington angler data not available. (4) Louisiana angler data not available for 2014. (5) Out-of-state angler estimates are not cnykatuve across states.