



2013 Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Opinions and Attitudes Survey

NOAA Fisheries science is world-class, providing trusted information to meet the varied needs of our partners and diverse stakeholders.

Background:

As the federal agency responsible for stewardship of America's living marine resources in federal waters, NOAA Fisheries seeks to understand the social and economic contributions of recreational and commercial fishing communities. **In 2013, we conducted our first-ever nationwide survey of recreational angler attitudes and preferences related to fishing quality and management.** More than 9,000 state and federally permitted anglers from 22 coastal states in the continental U.S. and Alaska responded to the survey.

The survey delivers on a commitment made in NOAA Fisheries' National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Action Agenda and contributes to our ongoing efforts to better understand what is important to saltwater anglers. The survey results will inform NOAA's decision-making and create a baseline against which to judge future performance.

Key Findings:

The results provide insights into saltwater recreational anglers' motivations, attitudes towards conservation, and preferred management objectives. Key findings include:

Anglers are optimistic about future fishing opportunities.

- 81% of anglers plan to take the same number or more trips next year as last.

Anglers fish for a variety of reasons.

- Motivations for wetting a line include:
 - Spending time with friends and family (87%).
 - Catching fish (83%).
 - Landing a trophy-sized fish (41%).
 - Taking fish home to eat (41%).

Anglers support marine fisheries conservation.

- 95% of respondents believe it is important to ensure high quality fishing opportunities exist for future generations.
- Anglers support conservation goals that include:
 - Recovering depleted fish stocks (92%).
 - Protecting threatened and endangered species (91%).
 - Restoring habitat (87%).
 - Reducing mortality of released fish (83%).

Anglers prefer management that protects fishing access and opportunity.

- Anglers would like to see management provide them with:
 - High quality areas (90%).
 - Diversity of fish species (85%).
 - Availability of abundant fish (80%).
- Anglers prefer management approaches that preserve fishing opportunities, such as:
 - Setting minimum sizes (79%).
 - Providing artificial habitats (76%).
 - Utilizing bag limits (71%).

Anglers believe management can improve.

- Anglers would like managers to provide more fish for recreational fishermen, better incorporate their input in decision-making, use high quality data in assessments and decision-making, and enforce regulations.
 - While 49% percent of anglers are satisfied that annual harvest limits provide enough fish for recreational fishermen, fully one-fifth (21%) are not.
 - Anglers recognized that having their voice heard in the management process is important (84%), however just 29% felt satisfied that recreational fishing perspectives are adequately considered.
- Anglers believe regulations should be more straightforward and easy-to-understand. Anglers would prefer:
 - Consistent federal and state regulations (86%).
 - Simpler regulations (85%).

Contribute to the Conversation:

The survey provides a high-level national snapshot that complements our ongoing economic work and contributes to the broader body of social science research on recreational saltwater fishing. Learn more about NOAA Fisheries' Economics Program at: www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/economics/

Additional analysis of the survey results is forthcoming and will provide more detailed information on how responses varied across regions, by demographic groups, and mode of fishing (for-hire, shore, private boat). Please contact Russ Dunn (Russell.Dunn@noaa.gov) for more information.

We encourage the recreational community to weigh in on the survey results from their local and regional perspectives. Use the following social media tools and online resources to keep the conversations going in your community:

- Follow @NOAAFisheries on Twitter and participate in the conversation using #AnglerReaction.
- Like the NOAA Fisheries Facebook page and share your thoughts on the survey results.
- Share photos of your favorite fishing experiences on Instagram with the tag @noaafisheries.

Survey Methodology:

The survey was conducted by NOAA Fisheries from February, 2013 through May, 2013. Approximately 36,000 U.S. residents from 22 coastal states (excluding Hawaii) who held an active state or federal fishing license were selected at random to receive a mail survey with just over 9,200 completed surveys returned. The survey was developed collaboratively in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including the Marine Fisheries Advisory Council's Recreational Fisheries Working Group, and the regional Agency staff.