



# MARINE RECREATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAM

**Implementation Plan  
Revision 5: 2013-2014 Update  
October 2013**



To help ensure the long-term sustainability of U.S. fisheries through enhanced estimates of marine recreational catch and effort, a partnership of public and private organizations is developing the Marine Recreational Information Program, an improved national system of regional surveys. This Implementation Plan outlines the history of the program, its current status, and future course.

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## **Marine Recreational Information Program Implementation Plan: 2013-2014 Update**

October 2013

The *MRIP Implementation Plan* is a joint product of the MRIP Operations, Communication and Education, Information Management, and Angler Registry Teams prepared with guidance from the Executive Steering Committee. The Implementation Plan provides an update on progress to date, as well as the blueprint for putting MRIP into action. A dynamic document, the *Implementation Plan* will continue to evolve in response to the latest science and the emerging needs of fisheries managers, regulators, policy makers and stakeholders.

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## Introduction

Throughout 2013, the Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, teams continued their work on improvements to the collection, reporting and management of recreational fishing catch and effort data. As past studies begin to yield a greater number of specific recommendations, and as those recommendations begin to get implemented in the field, MRIP's two-fold mission remains the same: produce data that meets the scientific needs of today's fisheries managers, and do this through a transparent, collaborative approach that engenders confidence among all stakeholders. This Implementation Plan Update discusses the specific MRIP initiatives that have taken place over the past year and outlines the priorities for 2014 that will keep the program moving toward its dual goals.

### 2013 Milestones

The MRIP teams continue to methodically catalogue the strengths and challenges of current recreational fishing catch and effort estimation methodologies, and develop and test improvements to what we have done in the past. Building on the improved catch estimation method that MRIP rolled out in 2012, this past year was also marked by a significant move toward on-the-ground implementation of new methodologies.

Significant research and implementation milestones from the past year include:

- **New APAIS Protocols.** Among the most visible of these initiatives was the implementation, beginning in Wave 2, of the new Access Point Angler Intercept Survey – the “dockside” catch surveys we conduct at the end of fishing trips to measure recreational catch on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. The new protocols remove sources of potential bias from our sampling process, which addresses one of the chief concerns raised by the National Research Council in its 2006 review of our survey methods.
- **Online Site Register.** Key to the process of activating our new survey protocols was the development of an online, interactive Site Register of every recreational fishing access point from Maine to Louisiana. Working extensively with our state partners, the Site Register captures and catalogues the numerous interconnected details required to make efficient and statistically sound site assignments. These elements include the site's location, fishing pressure (listed by time of day and month of the year) and amenities at each location that may have an impact on angler use. Although designed specifically as a component of the APAIS, the Register is built on a user-friendly Google Maps interface and is publicly available. The register is regularly updated using information from samplers, our state partners and crowd-sourced information that comes in from public users.
- **Expanded regional efforts.** Recognizing that the management needs from region to region, and even from fishery to fishery, can vary dramatically, MRIP was conceived as a series of regional surveys adhering to a set of rigorous national standards. In maintaining that role over the past year, MRIP tested survey design improvements that had been developed based on previous studies on the Pacific Coast and in Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

### Priorities for 2014

As outlined in the body of this Implementation Plan Update, priorities for 2014 focus on continuing to catalogue and test our fundamental survey designs, monitor and adjust new methodologies we have implemented in the field, and work to meet customer needs for

timeliness, precision and geographic resolution. We are exploring a move away from telephone surveys for effort estimates; greater use of licensing and registration information in conducting our surveys; options to increase reporting efficiency for the charter boat fleet; and what uses new and emerging technologies may have in the overall picture of understanding fishery health. To facilitate our constant evolution toward certification and implementation of survey methods, we are taking steps to ensure our capacity to manage these changes through an expanded commitment of our Executive Steering Committee.

Importantly, this ability to transition our areas of focus is itself a demonstration of one of the core aspects of MRIP – its flexibility. MRIP is grounded in the understanding that fisheries science and management is an always-evolving process, with new threats and new opportunities constantly emerging, and that recreational data collection needs to evolve in step. As fishing and coastal communities change, surveys that are effective today will need to be revisited again in the future. That’s why MRIP is more than a static set of surveys. It’s a process that enables us to keep our data collection methods as fluid and dynamic as the fisheries that they help to manage.

## **Team Reports**

### **Executive Steering Committee**

An Executive Steering Committee (ESC) guides MRIP priority-setting and decision-making processes. Representing state, federal and public interests, the role of the ESC is to provide:

- A connection between MRIP and the federal and state marine fisheries agencies, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and regional fishery management councils to ensure that user needs are being met;
- A means of accountability for the senior leadership of MRIP;
- Assistance in strategic decisions for MRIP; and
- Representation for MRIP in meetings of agencies and organizations outside of NOAA.

### **2013 Implementation Workshop**

In July of 2013 the ESC met to review the current status of MRIP projects and priorities, and discuss strategies for moving forward as more and more MRIP initiatives transition from the research to the implementation phase.

Among the outcomes of the meeting, the ESC agreed to recommend to NOAA Fisheries that a hybrid approach to MRIP implementation be established, whereby NOAA Fisheries (through MRIP) would maintain a central role in developing and certifying survey methods and establishing national standards and best practices, and regions (through the regional fishery information networks (FINs) or equivalent) would have responsibility for selecting survey methods and managing data collection.

The ESC agreed to take on a larger role in MRIP by including overview of the implementation phase of the program in addition to its overview of the research and development phase. The ESC also recommended expansion of the Operations Team’s charge to include monitoring implementation and recommending priorities for investment of MRIP funds and resources to assist regional implementation efforts. In its expanded role, the ESC also agreed to identify key gaps in implementation coverage, and monitor feedback from information users, particularly fisheries managers and stock assessment scientists.

Key specific decisions made at the workshop included:

1. The ESC recommended that it maintain its role of program overview and participation as MRIP transitions from research and development to implementation. As an overview body, the ESC should identify issues regarding implementation; seek feedback from regions on progress in implementation and any problems being encountered; determine if regional needs are being met and identify information gaps; and determine how MRIP can provide assistance in filling in those gaps. An outline of ESC responsibilities in MRIP implementation is detailed in the table below.
2. The FINs and their equivalents (i.e., ACCSP) will serve as the regional MRIP Implementation teams. The Caribbean and West Pacific groups that currently exist for information sharing will be sufficient to serve as implementation teams for those regions. An outline of regional teams' responsibilities in MRIP implementation is detailed in the table below.
3. MRIP priorities for investment of expanded survey implementation resources will generally be guided by whether the survey, alone or in combination with other surveys being implemented in a region:
  - a. Utilizes a MRIP-certified survey design or methodology;
  - b. Conforms to the MRIP standards for survey coverage and basic data elements ([http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/recreational/pdf/National\\_Standards\\_for\\_Survey\\_Coverage\\_and\\_Data\\_Elements.pdf](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/recreational/pdf/National_Standards_for_Survey_Coverage_and_Data_Elements.pdf));
  - c. Conforms to any additional national standards or best practices that the MRIP national implementation team may adopt in the future; and
  - d. Provides catch estimates for fisheries managed under MSRA (including Atlantic HMS or jointly by the states and NOAA Fisheries) that are deemed by the MRIP regional implementation team to provide recreational catch statistics sufficient to:
    - i. Complete generally reliable stock assessments;
    - ii. Support development of annual catch limits that meet MSRA requirements; and
    - iii. Support development of recreational regulations that minimize triggering of accountability measures.
4. MRIP should continue its role of supporting review of non-MRIP surveys to evaluate methodologies and/or identify areas for improvement.

## **Operations Team**

The MRIP Operations Team (OT) designs, tests and recommends improvements to NOAA Fisheries' recreational fishing data collection programs. Each year, the OT collaborates on research with teams of experts in survey design and management, natural resource management and stock assessment science, and individuals representing the recreational saltwater fishing community. Since 2007, the OT has funded 70 projects to develop improved survey designs that increase the accuracy of recreational fishing catch, effort and participation estimates. Complete descriptions of all OT-funded projects are available on the MRIP website at [www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov).

The MRIP projects completed or started in 2013, which are detailed below, will result in either direct implementation of improved survey methods or follow-up studies to continue testing alternative data collection designs.

**Implementing an improved catch survey design**

This year, MRIP implemented the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, a new angler catch survey on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. The improved survey protocols eliminate or minimize significant sources of survey error that could skew catch estimates, which were a major concern expressed by the National Research Council in its 2006 review.

MRIP tested the new survey methodology in a pilot project in North Carolina that wrapped up in 2012. The project team's final recommendations were peer reviewed by outside experts in survey design and approved for implementation by MRIP's Executive Steering Committee and NOAA Fisheries. A final report for the pilot project is available on the MRIP website.

Following the rollout of the angler catch survey, MRIP began working with state and Commission partners to monitor the survey's performance and make necessary adjustments to achieve regional and state sampling goals. MRIP also continues to test improvements to all onsite surveys, including the angler catch survey. MRIP-funded projects are examining new technologies, such as electronic reporting and video monitoring of catch where intercept surveys are conducted, and fishing activity at privately-owned sites that are inaccessible to field interviewers.

**Expanding regional efforts**

MRIP tested survey design improvements recommended by previous reviews of survey methodologies on the Pacific Coast, including the California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS), the Oregon Recreational Boat Survey (ORBS), the Washington Ocean Sampling Program (OSP) and the Washington Puget Sound Sampling Program (PSSP). The reviews, which took place in 2011 and 2012, resulted in recommendations for improved data collection and estimation designs. Each new design has since started or completed stages of pilot testing in the respective states, and if approved by NOAA Fisheries, the methods will be certified for continued use.

Similar reviews of ongoing and alternative survey designs for Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were also completed. These reviews have resulted in designing and testing new survey methods in these regions.

**Guam: Pilot surveys of unsampled fishing sites**

Pilot surveys are looking at ways to meet the challenge of quantifying catch and effort at unsampled ports and shoreline sites in Guam. The project is testing modifications to the existing creel survey that include calibrated adjustment factors in the expansion of catch, effort, and catch per unit effort (CPUE) for areas and times not currently being surveyed. Better estimates of how many anglers are fishing at night or from private access points will help produce more accurate estimates of total catch, effort and CPUE.

**Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands: Reviewing survey methodologies**

MRIP reviewed sampling methods for both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). The review included workshops with local and federal government staff, universities, stakeholders and statistical consultants in both locations. The OT approved the final reviews and recommendations made by the statistical consultants and funded projects to revise and implement new methods incorporating the recommendations. In 2013, the USVI initiated a multi-year project to establish baseline data on the recreational fishery, utilizing an existing

vessel registration list and the federal Highly Migratory Species and Angler Registry databases for conducting mail and telephone surveys. In Puerto Rico, a follow-up study will assess fishing activity for Queen Conch.

### **On-site effort survey in Hawaii**

In 2012, a workshop was held to review the Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS). The resulting report provided recommendations to 1) review historical data to determine if estimates can be revised, and reduce the mismatch between the survey design and the estimation procedure, 2) focus on private boat and shore fishing modes, and 3) develop and implement a pilot study to obtain on-site effort estimates for shore fishing—with a supplemental off-site method to account for non-accessible areas. In 2013, funding was granted to focus on the third recommendation. A follow-up workshop was conducted in 2013 to design an on-site effort sampling method with a companion off-site method. Pilot implementation of the new sampling designs will be proposed in 2014.

### **Addressing under-coverage in Washington and Oregon**

MRIP has partnered with Oregon and Washington to improve both states' sampling and estimation methods. One of the concerns that stemmed from the MRIP review of the Oregon Recreational Boat Survey and Washington Ocean Sampling Programs was under-coverage of fishing effort, both temporally and spatially. In 2013, Oregon initiated two new projects to address under-coverage issues in the catch and effort surveys. One project established a video boat count system at a previously unsampled port in Nehalem. Cameras were set up at various sites to capture boats coming in and out of the port, and a sampler was hired to review the footage and report fishing effort. The second project extended the sampling season in multiple ports to a year-round sampling regime. During winter months, which are generally not surveyed because effort is thought to be low, the number of fishing trips taken may be higher than previously thought in some areas. The state of Washington completed a second sampling year to continue sampling in 'shoulder' months, the months of March, April and October, increasing the accuracy and reliability of fishing effort estimates for months considered low effort.

MRIP will continue to work with the west coast states who implement their own surveys. Improved and successful methods will be reviewed by MRIP and certified in 2014.

### **Implementation of electronic logbooks on headboats**

Over the past several years, MRIP has funded efforts to assess the feasibility and reliability of electronic reporting of catch. We continued this trend by supporting the expansion of electronic logbook reporting to all headboats reporting to the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, an undertaking that resulted in 160 headboats in the south Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico with the option of participating in electronic reporting. A previous pilot study conducted in the region showed a high percentage of both participation and species reporting accuracy compared with the paper logbook reporting. Improvements in the software (including an internet-based reporting system); training of headboat captains in reporting, revising the regulatory structure of electronic reporting; and the addition of specific data elements such as precise locations, fishing depth, and target species are being done with the current survey-wide implementation.

### **Priorities for 2013/2014**

In 2014, the OT will continue to implement and evaluate alternative data collection designs. As described above, we will prioritize ongoing studies, and will design and implement necessary follow-up studies to finalize data collection approaches. To date, research efforts have generally

focused on addressing concerns identified by the NRC, such as evaluating sampling and estimation designs for large-scale catch and effort surveys administered or funded by NOAA Fisheries. As new sampling and estimation approaches are implemented, research priorities will shift toward more subtle refinement of data collection methods to better address stakeholder needs. Examples of possible project areas include:

- Continued evaluation of catch and effort surveys administered by state natural resource agencies;
- Development of methods to estimate catch and effort at greater levels of temporal and spatial resolution, including both design- and model-based approaches;
- Assessment of non-sampling errors, such as non-response error, coverage error and measurement error, in recreational fishing surveys;
- Continued development and testing of new technologies, such as electronic data capture and online reporting, to support recreational fisheries data collection; and
- Optimization of sampling allocations within and among recreational fishing surveys to satisfy stakeholder needs for precision.

## **National Saltwater Angler Registry and State Exemption Program Report**

The Magnuson-Steven Act (Section 401(g)(1)) requires NOAA to register and collect identification and contact information for anglers and for-hire vessels if they fish in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), for Continental Shelf fishery resources beyond the EEZ, or for anadromous species throughout their range, including state waters. However, anglers and vessels that are licensed or registered by a state are exempt from the federal registration requirement if the state provides sufficient identification and contact information for use in recreational surveys. The resultant federal registry must address both the qualifications and procedures for registering anglers and vessels, and for exempting qualified states' anglers and vessels from the federal registration requirement. Federal regulations were adopted in 2008 to implement the National Saltwater Angler Registry. The regulations include:

- Standards and process by which states may apply for exempted state designation based on their provision of license/registry-based sample frames;
- Standards and process by which states may apply for exempted state designation based on use of state license/registry data to perform surveys of recreational catch and effort;
- Detailed requirements and process by which anglers and for-hire vessels from non-exempt states enroll in the federal registry; and
- Requirements for registration fees beginning January 1, 2011.

The registry regulations are available online at:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/FR-2013-08-14/2013-19737/content-detail.html>

During 2010 and 2011, NOAA Fisheries entered into Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) with each of the states that qualify for Exempted State designation. Pursuant to the MOAs, those states have been formally designated as Exempted States, and the states have begun to submit data as called for in the MOAs. The Exempted States are:

- *For submission of state license holder or registry data:* Alabama; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Florida; Georgia; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts;

Mississippi; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New York; North Carolina; Rhode Island; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; Texas; Virginia.

- *For participation in and submission of catch data from an approved regional survey:* Alaska; American Samoa; California; Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; Guam; Oregon; Washington.

In 2013, NOAA Fisheries updated the National Registry operating procedures and fee to take into account the reduced number of federal registrations resulting from the exemptions of nearly all of the states. Federal registrations declined from 20,000 to 50,000 per week in 2010 to 100 to 400 per week in 2013. Also, the number of registrations issued via the telephone call center option has declined significantly, and was less than 10% of the total registrations, or fewer than ten per week, by mid-2013. As a result, the per-unit cost of issuing registrations has risen from approximately \$15.00 to over \$65.00. Rather than increase the registration fee to account for the full amount of this increase, NOAA has reduced the telephone call center support hours for federal registrations to reduce overall cost. Effective in August of 2013, the call center hours were reduced from 20 hours a day, seven (7) days a week, including all Federal holidays to four (4) hours a day (1:00 pm to 5:00 pm EST), seven (7) days a week, including all Federal holidays. During these hours of operation, the call center operators will assist registrants by fielding calls from applicants and returning calls from applicants who have left messages. The web-based registration option will be fully maintained and will not be affected by the call center changes. The registration fee has been increased to \$25.00 to reflect the current cost of registration services following the changes to the call center operations.

### **2012/2013 Registry Program Activities**

In 2012/2013, NOAA Fisheries:

- Received angler registry data from each of the Atlantic and Gulf coast states and entered the data into the national registry database.
- Completed evaluations of the initial state registry data feeds from all of the Atlantic and Gulf coast states, and provided the states with advanced data quality reports and recommendations for improvements to the state databases. Receipt by the states of these reports triggers a provision of the state MOAs whereby the states will prepare registry data quality improvement plans.
- Continued to make funds available for grants to states, through the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, to support initial data quality improvement projects.
- Supplied registry data from the states of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, and for the registry sample component of the MRIP Pilot Project Continued Development and Testing of Dual Frame Surveys of Fishing Effort (the project plan and update are available on our website under “projects”).
- Supplied registry data from the states of Florida, Massachusetts, New York and North Carolina to support the frame matching component of the MRIP Project Finalize Design of MRIP Fishing Effort Surveys.
- Supplied registry data from the Atlantic and Gulf coast states for a national survey of recreational angler attitudes and preferences.

**2013/2014 Planned Activities**

In 2013/2014, we will:

- Continue to work with states to complete registry data quality improvement plans that address the recommendations of the advanced data quality reports provided to states in 2011/12, and any other requirements of the states' MOAs.
- Continue to provide grants to states through the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions to assist the states in implementing the provisions of their data quality improvement plans.
- Supply registry data from the states of Florida, Massachusetts, New York and North Carolina, and to support the MRIP pilot project Finalize Design of MRIP Effort Surveys (the project plan and update are available on our website under "projects").
- Maintain registry databases for the Atlantic and Gulf Coast states and make them available for additional pilots or new survey method deployment, as needed.
- Obtain state data on for-hire vessel licenses and registrations to support the MRIP effort to establish a new and more complete for-hire vessel registry.

**Information Management Team**

The Information Management Team (IMT) supports the national-level processing and management of Recreational saltwater fishing data by ensuring the comparability and compatibility of recreational fishing statistics among regional data collection programs. In 2013, the IMT began implementation of a three-year operations plan focused on data access, analytical tools and data quality management. These priorities address NOAA Fisheries directives for data management, as well as recommendations from the NRC. In 2013, the IMT continued to improve the accessibility and use of MRIP data through projects and initiatives, including:

**Continued development of the MRIP Site Registry**

The IMT, in cooperation with our state partners, continued the development of the new online registry of coastal fishing sites. Historically, contractors and partners have maintained separate registers of fishing sites in their state or region. The new online site register provides a host of new tools and features that allow partners to map and update sites more easily, and share this information with the public through a new web interface. NOAA Fisheries will maintain the website and database to ensure a high level of data quality, maintain consistency between regions and increase sampling efficiency.

**Southeast Regional Headboat Survey Database update**

The Southeast Regional Headboat Survey (SRHS) database transitioned to a complete Oracle system which resides at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). The system is a fully relational system incorporating the multiple components of the SRHS (logbook reports of catch and effort, reports of effort activity, biological data records and in time the new dockside and at sea catch effort interviews for verification of log reports), auditing and other quality control components, including data extracting (downloading) capabilities for offline analysis and use. As a result of this new system, catch and effort information compatible (to the extent possible) to the MRIP estimates of catch and effort are readily available for incorporation in national reports on recreational fisheries.

**Continued release of data query tool features**

We enhanced the existing online data query tools with additional selection options, output options and graphics. We updated the tables to improve the users' experience and provide a clearer representation of our data. A National Summary Query was added, covering all U.S. coastal states to expand our standard coverage to include data provided by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. All MRIP data are publically available via our online query tool.

**Priorities for 2013/2014:**

- Include fully-documented metadata (the contents and context of data) for all ongoing and legacy programs and make it available online to the public.
- Add user guides to help new users correctly interpret the characteristics, uses and limitations of the data.
- Develop analytical tools to enhance the understanding of the data.
- Continue to add selection, download and output options to the website query tools.
- Continue to expand MDMS to tie pilot projects to the resulting data, as well as project management needs.
- Develop an integrated for-hire vessel directory.

**Communications and Education Team**

In coordination with the other MRIP teams, the Communications and Education Team (CET) works on a variety of projects to keep those with a stake in recreational fishing data engaged in our work and updated on our progress and developments. In its 2006 report, the National Research Council explained:

*“Ultimately, the value of marine recreational fishing data, whether collected by the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) or any other survey, will be judged by the extent to which it meets the needs of the individuals who use the data and will be trusted by those whose lives are affected by the ways the data are used. ... Communication and outreach efforts are essential to foster confidence in the quality of the data among managers, other decision makers, and those who rely on the fishery resources for recreation or for a living.”*

In 2013, our efforts to meet this NRC charge to build confidence and trust among stakeholders included:

**Communications support for the implementation of the new angler catch survey**

NOAA Fisheries changed the way we collect catch information on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts by putting in place an improved MRIP catch survey. In support of this major milestone, the CET helped facilitate the communications rollout strategy that built on its work in 2011-12 with an Observer Team made up of stakeholders whose input helped guide the outreach strategy and implementation. The effort involved reaching out to leaders and key stakeholders in the recreational fishing community, states, councils, commissions and internal NOAA offices. The tactics and materials developed with the Observer Team were tested and further developed through focus groups with anglers and coastal residents and a series of regional stakeholder meetings. This suite of materials – developed in cooperation with states and anglers – was designed to increase understanding of the new survey, the changes that were made and the implications of those changes. These materials are being distributed to anglers and tackle shops

in virtually every state along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. In addition to the sampler outreach materials, we developed other supporting resources including a fact sheet, video, presentation and new web content.

### **Communications support for the release of the for-hire electronic reporting pilot project report**

An ongoing MRIP priority has been to explore new technologies and methods to gather catch and trip information from the charter for-hire industry. A pilot study tested the feasibility of using electronic logbooks to collect landings and fishing effort data. The CET worked with the project team to release the highly-anticipated findings from the pilot; a responsibility that included developing key messages and supporting presentations, releases and updates to clearly articulate the findings and implications.

### **Communications support for the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS)**

Highly Migratory Species surveys and management constitute a virtual NOAA “region,” creating unique communication and education needs and opportunities. Working with the LPS team, the CET developed materials tailored to LPS outreach, including the insertion of MRIP messaging into materials that are handed out to LPS captains and stakeholders for other purposes (e.g. tuna guides).

### **Communications support for data collection partners**

The CET worked with the states of Massachusetts and New York to build on the focus groups and regional stakeholder meetings (above) by conducting follow-up angler outreach. Responding to the requests of our state partners in Massachusetts and New York, we conducted face-to-face and virtual angler meetings tailored to address the specific concerns of the areas. We also used feedback from these meetings to create new outreach products on MRIP and the angler registries.

### **MRIP project support**

MRIP has a variety of ongoing projects through the year. In an effort to effectively communicate the progress, findings and recommendations of these projects, the CET works with the project teams to design tailored communications plans. We have begun collaborating with the team working on the potentially high-profile “Angler Action” pilot study, MRIP’s first field test to determine the potential scientific uses for self-selected angler data. The CET will provide as-needed technical and outreach support.

### **Enhanced online presence**

The MRIP website – [www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov](http://www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov) – is the clearinghouse for information about MRIP. The CET, in cooperation with the IMT, rebooted the MRIP website with a cleaner look, more intuitive navigation and more interactive features.

The homepage now features a rotating interactive graphic to draw people into the site. For example, the CET created an MRIP presentation based on stakeholder feedback from last year’s MRIP Road Show. This narrated presentation provides a self-guided introduction to the basics of our data collection and analysis and current efforts to improve upon them. Homepage graphics change quarterly in order to keep the content fresh and informative.

Another new feature of the website is a comprehensive, online database of public recreational fishing sites on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts (Maine through Louisiana, Puerto Rico and Hawaii) built by the IMT. The Site Register increases transparency by making our list of fishing sites

accessible to the public and including information that individuals or third-party developers may find useful in finding or accessing fishing sites. Equally important, since each fishing site is dynamic, members of the public can contact us directly to provide updated information.

### **MRIP stakeholder updates**

The CET emails a regular newsletter called the “Newscast” to keep stakeholders engaged and up-to-date. The Newscast chronicles MRIP progress and developments and provides contact information for stakeholders who have questions or comments. In addition, we’ve improved two-way communication by answering questions submitted by stakeholders.

### **Priorities for 2013/2014 include:**

- **Continue conducting field visits to gather feedback, with a focus on the West Coast.** The CET plans to meet with stakeholders and partners on the West Coast in 2014 to continue its efforts to tell the story of MRIP’s progress, gather feedback from recreational anglers and test materials. This effort will require developing new messaging in order to reflect the differences in MRIP presence and stakeholder concerns on the West Coast as compared to the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.
- **Support release of the new angler effort survey.** Many stakeholders are interested in the transition from the telephone survey to a mail survey and how licensing and registration information is being used in MRIP catch and effort surveys. The rollout of the new angler effort mail survey is an opportunity for MRIP to talk about one of the most visible aspects of the program. The CET will implement a robust communications strategy in coordination with the Operations Team in order to capitalize on this unique opportunity.
- **Enhance for-hire survey awareness.** The CET will increase engagement with the for-hire sector to ensure we’re effectively communicating what has been accomplished under MRIP, build a dialogue with industry about direction the program is headed, and ensure all parties are aligned with the on-the-ground realities of resources, needs and priorities. The goal is a focused outreach effort for the for-hire sector similar to the regional angler-focused 2012 regional Roadshow.
- **Address growing interest in emerging electronic technologies for data collection and reporting.** MRIP has funded a number of pilot projects in different regions in the U.S. to determine which electronic technologies are effective solutions for recreational fisheries data collection needs, and how they can be most effectively used. In addition, NOAA Fisheries has launched an Agency-wide effort to examine electronic technologies for reporting and monitoring in both recreational and commercial fisheries. The CET will coordinate with this effort and work with the project teams and stakeholders to create a dialogue and help set accurate expectations for use of emerging technologies.
- **Foster productive relationships with internal and external partners and stakeholders.** The CET will strengthen ties with existing partners (e.g. Councils, Commissions, States) and increase cooperation among NOAA Fisheries headquarter, regional office and science center staff. We will also seek out new partners including Sea Grant to improve two-way communication among MRIP, partners and stakeholders.
- **Continue to support the release of historic data using the improved catch estimation method.** The CET will add communications and outreach support NOAA Fisheries’ plans to use the improved catch estimation method released this year to re-estimate historic data before 2004.

## **MRIP Regional Implementation Update**

### **Atlantic (Regional Partnership: Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program--ACCSP):**

- New weighted estimation methods have been completed and adopted for estimation of catch rates from intercept data.
- Key decisions for shore and private boat mode intercept survey design have been made and are reflected in recently updated ACCSP standards.
- The new MRIP Access Point Angler Intercept Survey design has been implemented for shore, private boat and for-hire modes for the entire Atlantic coast, effective March, 2013.
- Decisions on using sampling and estimation methodology equivalent to that being used for shore and private boat modes, or switching to census-based design for the for-hire mode, will be necessary, working with all the ACCSP partners.
- ACCSP standards have been updated to set goals for coverage and timeliness. MRIP is supporting a workshop in 2013 to develop goals for precision of catch estimates.
- MRIP is developing model tools to enable evaluation of the tradeoffs among cost, precision, and timeliness of delivery for preliminary estimates. These tools should be available for use in 2014.
- Decisions on effort survey methodology for shore and boat modes are expected in 2014.
- Consistent with the Regional Implementation Policy outlined above, MRIP will work with ACCSP to convene workshops to make choices and secure partner resource commitments based on the precision workshop and tradeoff model outputs, including:
  - Setting goals for survey coverage, precision and timeliness.
  - Evaluating the results of the tradeoff models and making choices and partner resource commitments based on the model outputs.
  - Determining unmet data needs and priorities for additional data collection.

### **Gulf (Regional Partnership: Gulf Recreational Fisheries Information System—Gulf FIN):**

- New weighted estimation methods have been completed and adopted for estimation of catch rates from intercept data.
- Key decisions for shore and private boat mode intercept survey, and headboat survey catch and effort design have been made.
- The new MRIP Access Point Angler Intercept Survey design has been implemented for shore, private boat and charter boat modes for the Gulf coast, effective March, 2013.
- Decisions on using sampling and estimation methodology equivalent to that being used for shore and private boat modes, or switching to census-based design for the charter boat mode, will be necessary, working with all the GulfFIN partners.
- MRIP is developing model tools to enable evaluation of the tradeoffs among cost, precision, and timeliness of delivery for preliminary estimates. These tools should be available for use in 2014.
- Decisions on effort survey methodology for shore and boat modes are expected in 2014.
- Consistent with the Regional Implementation Policy outlined above, MRIP will work with GulfFIN to convene workshops to make choices and secure partner resource commitments based on the precision workshop and tradeoff model outputs, including:
  - Setting goals for survey coverage, precision, and timeliness.
  - Evaluating the results of the tradeoff models and making choices and partner resource commitments based on the model outputs.
  - Determining unmet data needs and priorities for additional data collection.

- Red snapper management presents unique data requirements that may not be adequately fulfilled by basic MRIP survey methods. MRIP will work with GulfFIN in 2013/2014 to identify and test survey designs specific to red snapper needs.

**Caribbean:**

- Current data collection methods in use in Puerto Rico are similar to those in use for the Atlantic and Gulf regions. There is no recreational data collection at present in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Data needs and initial choices of survey design, coverage, etc., for improvement to the survey in Puerto Rico, and for new data collection programs in the U.S. Virgin Islands, were identified in MRIP-sponsored workshops held in 2012.
- Pilot projects to test methods identified via the workshops began in 2013. Additional pilot projects may be proposed in future years to develop and test additional data collection methods. Following completion of the pilot projects, additional workshops will be needed with the regional partners (Caribbean Fishery Management Council, U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico governments, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office and Science Center), possibly facilitated by GulfFIN, to come to decisions on future survey implementation.
- The MRIP weighted estimation methodology and the improved Access Point Angler Intercept survey design that have been implemented in the Atlantic and Gulf regions are also applicable to Puerto Rico. In 2014, decisions will be made how to most effectively incorporate these improvements in the Puerto Rico surveys.

**Hawaii:**

- At present, shore and private boat mode catch data are collected via the Hawaii Marine Recreational Survey (HMRFS), and effort data is derived from a Hawaii-specific version of the Coastal Household Telephone Survey. The survey design is similar to that in use in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regions.
- MRIP has funded several projects to document and evaluate current survey methods.
- Based on the results of the completed MRIP projects and the results of expert consultant evaluation and a regional workshop funded by MRIP in 2012, data needs and initial choices of preferred survey design, coverage, etc., have been defined.
- The preferred regional approach for collection of data from charter boats is for submission of logbook trip reports by charter boat operators, all of whom are required to hold a Commercial Marine License and report catch to the state. A MRIP-funded project recommended methods to improve the performance of the logbook program, which the regional partners are considering.
- Additional pilot projects to test identified choices are under way. These include a survey of state-registered private boat owners to collect catch and effort data for that mode, and a roving creel survey to obtain on-site catch and effort data for the shore mode. Following completion of the pilot projects, additional workshops will be needed with the regional partners (Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, State of Hawaii, NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office and Science Center) to come to decisions on future survey implementation.
- The MRIP weighted estimation methodology and the improved Access Point Angler Intercept survey design that have been implemented in the Atlantic and Gulf regions are also applicable to Hawaii. If the region chooses to maintain the current intercept design

approach in the future, decisions will need to be made how to most effectively incorporate these improvements in the HMRFS surveys.

**Pacific (Regional Partner: Pacific Recreational Fisheries Information Network—Pacific RecFIN):**

- Via Pacific RecFIN, a series of survey method review workshops were held to develop recommended improvements to survey designs for Washington, Oregon, and California. The improved methods are being piloted in all three states in 2012-2014.
- MRIP, along with regional partners, tested survey design improvements recommended by each review and developed recommendations for improved data collection and estimation designs. Each new design has since started or completed stages of pilot testing in the respective states, and if approved by NOAA Fisheries, the methods will be certified for continued use within the MRIP Toolbox.
- New projects in Oregon and Washington are focusing on under-coverage of catch and effort.
- Future RecFIN workshops and regular meetings of its Technical Committee will evaluate pilot project results and regional data needs, resulting in decisions about what improvements to methods and expansions to coverage will be implemented.

**Alaska:**

- All Alaska surveys are funded and conducted by the State of Alaska, Department of Fish and Game (DFG). DFG and other regional partners will be provided with information on improved survey methods developed via MRIP.
- MRIP will remain open to entering into a state-federal partnership in Alaska if desired by the regional partners.

**Atlantic HMS:**

- Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) are included in a separate “MRIP Region” due to the unique distribution and management structure for these fisheries. The HMS stocks are widely distributed in U.S., foreign, and international waters in the North Atlantic, including all five Council Regions covering the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and Atlantic. For the most part, Atlantic HMS are managed separately from other MSA-managed fisheries, with a distinct suite of management partners, including a substantial international management component under the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.
- MRIP has funded projects that:
  - Characterized HMS recreational fisheries in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, and examined the benefits of expanding coverage of the Large Pelagics Survey (LPS) which currently is conducted from Maine through Virginia.
  - Pilot tested new census-based approaches to estimate recreational landings of key management species such as Bluefin tuna and blue marlin.
- Evaluated current approaches for collecting data from HMS tournaments and recommended ways to improve the accuracy and reliability of this information. In 2013, MRIP supported a workshop to review results of MRIP HMS projects and the applicability of other MRIP methods (including the weighted estimation and intercept survey designs implemented in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regions). The Workshop produced recommendations for consideration for design improvements and survey expansion for HMS data collection.

- MRIP sponsored a review of the LPS and funded a project to develop new estimation methods. Recommendations for improvements to the intercept and telephone surveys should be completed in 2014 and a pilot study should follow.
- MRIP will continue dialogue with key partners (NOAA Fisheries HMS Division, HMS Advisory Panel, NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs, ACCSP, GulfFIN, leading to decision-making on improving HMS data collection, possibly via one or more regional workshops.