



NOAA FISHERIES

Stock Assessment Data

Stock assessments are based on models of fish populations and require three primary categories of information: abundance, biology, and catch.

- **ABUNDANCE DATA** comes from *fishery-independent* sources, meaning it is not collected from fishermen. Instead, scientists return to the same locations year after year to sample the amount and type of fish present there. This provides a lengthy time series of comparable data that is not subject to economic, weather, social, or other trends that may affect the amount of fishing from one year to the next.
- **BIOLOGICAL DATA** includes information on fish size, age, reproductive rates, and movement. Samples for biological studies are collected during fishery-independent surveys and obtained from observers on commercial and for-hire vessels and other fishery sampling programs. Academic programs and cooperative research with the fishing industry are other important sources of biological data.
- **CATCH DATA** is information that we get directly from commercial, recreational, and for-hire fishermen through a broad array of reporting and survey programs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov

Reaching more anglers, more effectively: Improved MRIP Effort Survey

Mail-Based Effort Survey

In November of 2014, MRIP released the results of a pilot study that detailed a new mail-based method for surveying saltwater recreational anglers about their trips. The findings indicated mail surveys do a better job than the current Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) to capture recreational fishing trips (fishing effort) by reaching a broader population of anglers, getting more accurate information from respondents, and delivering higher response rates. This pilot study was a culmination of an extensive series of studies designed to improve our saltwater recreational fishing effort survey for shore and private boat modes on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

The pilot study showed that the new mail-based Fishing Effort Survey (FES) will produce substantially different estimates than the CHTS. Given the implications of this study, NOAA Fisheries recognized the FES cannot be implemented immediately as a replacement for the CHTS, and a well thought out transition plan is needed to ensure that the phase-in of the FES:

- Is appropriately integrated into ongoing stock assessments and fisheries management actions in a way that minimizes disruptions to these processes, which are based on input from multiple data sources over lengthy time series;
- Creates a replicable process for implementing new or improved scientific methods into fisheries science, stock assessment, and management;
- Supports the Recreational Fisheries Policy goals and guiding principles to foster, support, and enhance a broadly accessible and diverse array of sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries and builds stakeholder support, understanding, and engagement in implementing the new survey; and
- Advances the mission of NOAA Fisheries to ensure the sustainability of our nation's living marine resources.

NOAA Fisheries identified members for a Transition Team that includes experts from state natural resource agencies, Regional Fishery Management Councils, Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, and NOAA Fisheries. The charge of the team was to produce a comprehensive transition strategy for replacing the CHTS with the mail-based FES.

Transition Plan Overview

The FES Transition Plan ensures the new numbers are incorporated into stock assessments and management in a timely fashion, but also in a way that is scientifically sound, statistically robust, and ensures the sustainability of recreational fishing.

Developed with extensive regional and state input, the transition plan outlines a detailed three-year process for shifting to the FES estimates for stock assessments and management decisions. During the transition, the FES and the CHTS will be conducted concurrently. This side-by-side benchmarking will allow an “apples-to-apples” comparison and enable us to develop a calibration model to convert historical time series of catch from old to new numbers.

The plan also reinforces the critical decision to use CHTS estimates for science and management purposes throughout the transition process. For the FES estimates to have statistical relevance, we must first complete the calibration process, and then integrate the numbers into the decades-long, CHTS-based stock assessment time series. The complete version of the transition plan can be found at www.countmyfish.noaa.gov.

FES Transition Timeline At-A-Glance



	2015				2016				2017			
	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec
<p>The FES Transition Plan follows a rigorous process to incorporate new data into science and management as quickly as possible, but also in a way that is scientifically sound, statistically robust, and ensures the long-term sustainability of recreational fishing.</p> <p>For a more detailed transition timeline, visit www.countmyfish.noaa.gov.</p>												
<p>➤ Side-by-side benchmarking <i>The FES and CHTS will be conducted side-by-side to identify and account for the key factors leading to differences in the estimates. This process will also include additional research and studies.</i></p>												
<p>➤ Develop calibration model <i>Looking at the results of the benchmarking, a calibration model will be developed that will enable an “apples-to-apples” comparison between the CHTS and FES estimates.</i></p>												
<p>➤ Re-estimation of historical catch <i>Once a calibration approach has been proposed, peer-reviewed, and approved, the model will be used to generate a more accurate time series of recreational catch statistics using the new FES estimates.</i></p>												
<p>➤ Incorporation of new estimates into stock assessments <i>The revised catch statistics will be incorporated into stock assessments to provide the most accurate status of managed fisheries and provide data for setting new ACLs. The transition plan includes a prioritized list of species for updated assessments.</i></p>												
<p>➤ Incorporation of new estimates into ACLs and management actions <i>Once revised catch statistics and new assessment results become available, managers will begin using them to make decisions moving forward.</i></p>												