

New Angler Catch Survey Collects More Accurate Data

How does NOAA Fisheries collect catch data?

The Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is the new way NOAA Fisheries is collecting, analyzing and reporting recreational fishing data. MRIP gathers catch information by conducting angler catch surveys at public access fishing sites. Our samplers are assigned to a specific site during a specific time of day. Their job is to interview and count all anglers at the site. During an interview, they measure and weigh all landed fish and ask how many of each species the angler released.

A sampler interviews all eligible anglers at an assigned site. It's just as important to interview anglers who didn't catch any fish as it is to interview anglers who caught many fish. Both types are needed to produce representative samples of all anglers.

Why were new protocols developed?

The new angler catch survey procedures are based on recommendations made in an independent review of NOAA Fisheries data collection methods and tested in a pilot study. The new survey procedures do a better job of accounting for all types of completed trips and remove potential sources of bias from our survey design. We are sampling during all parts of the day and reducing sampler latitude regarding which sites to sample and in what order.

The new survey also ensures the way we collect data complements the way we use it to produce estimates of catch. Our sampling methods had previously focused on maximizing the number of completed fishing trips sampled. We will now focus our efforts on maximizing the number of site days sampled.

What will be different?

- Samplers will be sampling during all parts of the day, including at night.
- Samplers will stay at a specified location for a specified amount of time, regardless of the amount of fishing activity.
- Each sampling assignment will include a specific site cluster, a specified order in which to visit sites in that cluster, one fishing mode and a time interval.

There may be instances when our samplers are at a fishing site where there isn't much activity. These samplers are fulfilling a vital role because accurately documenting low-activity sites helps ensure representative estimates.

Sampling in Practice

A sampler's assignment includes a sampling date, a specific six-hour time block, a site cluster, the order of sites to visit within the cluster and the specific fishing mode for intercepting anglers. They stay on-site for the duration of an assignment and count ALL completed trips and sample as many eligible anglers as possible.

What is a "site cluster?"

A group of sites with similar characteristics. Each cluster contains 1-3 sites. Sites are clustered by:

- Mode (shore, boat, for-hire)
- Level of fishing activity, or "pressure"
- Geographic proximity



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Example Assignment

Sampling Date: June 24, 2013

Time Interval: 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Mode: shore

Site Cluster: 3 sites, medium pressure



2:00 p.m.

Arrive at Site 1 in cluster.
Count & interview all anglers.
After 2 hours, depart site.



4:22 p.m.

Arrive at Site 2 in cluster,
after drive time.
Count & interview all anglers.
After 2 hours, depart site.



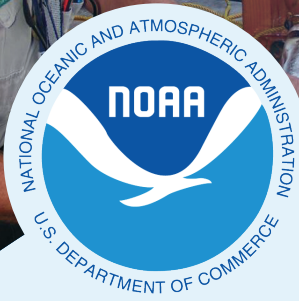
6:38 p.m.

Arrive at Site 3 in cluster,
after drive time.
Count & interview all anglers.
At 8:00 p.m., conclude
interviews.
Assignment is complete.



Key Takeaways for the Improved Angler Catch Survey

- We've REMOVED POTENTIAL FOR BIAS from our sampling design by controlling all variable selections in the sample selection program.
- We're sampling during EVERY part of the day, including nighttime periods, during both weekends and weekdays.
- We will CONTINUE to intercept ALL eligible trips, regardless of catch. No-catch trips are equally valuable sources of data as trips with large catches.
- We are NOT using the number of completed interviews to measure "completed site day assignments"; we will continue to interview at a specific location for a specific amount of time regardless of how many interviews are obtained.
- The new sampling methods are part of a much broader, top-to-bottom overhaul to both improve the quality of our estimates and improve stakeholder confidence.
- Future improvements to the catch surveys will address finer-scale customer needs, such as greater timeliness for estimate production and improved geographic resolution of estimates.
- Each decision comes with a cost. Greater precision requires more sampling, which in turn requires the investment of more resources.



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NOAA Fisheries is an agency within the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our nation's economic, social and environmental needs. The NOAA Fisheries Service provides world class science and stewardship.

The Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is the new way NOAA Fisheries is collecting, analyzing and reporting recreational fishing data. MRIP gathers catch information through in-person surveys of anglers taken at the completion of a fishing trip.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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