



# NEWSCAST

The Newsletter of the Marine Recreational Information Program

## NOAA FISHERIES



**October 17, 2012**  
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The Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is the way NOAA Fisheries is counting and reporting marine recreational catch and effort. It is a customer-driven initiative that not only produces better estimates, but does so through a process grounded in the principles of transparency, accountability and engagement.

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## **Southeast Region Headboat Survey celebrates 40 years, looks forward to future improvements**

As the Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, MRIP projects are underway to incorporate new technologies that will strengthen the accuracy and timeliness of the data it collects. MRIP is working with the SRHS to move away from logbooks to survey-wide electronic logbook reporting by conducting a pilot project to look for the best methods to make this transition. MRIP and the SRHS are also working together on an ongoing project to develop a method for validating self-reported catch data from headboats. To read more about both projects, please visit a database of all MRIP-funded projects at <https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mdms/public/public.jsp>.

The Headboat Survey has been a key provider of recreational fishing effort, catch, and biological information to support stock assessments of reef fish species since it first began operating along the southeast coast of the U.S. in 1972 and along the Gulf of Mexico in 1986. The SRHS is administered by the NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center at the Beaufort Laboratory.

If you have any questions regarding the SRHS, please contact Ken Brennan at [Kenneth.Brennan@noaa.gov](mailto:Kenneth.Brennan@noaa.gov), or 252-728-8618.

## **Communications and Education Team gathers feedback from anglers in New England**

In 2006, the National Research Council identified outreach and communications as "essential" to addressing the fundamental need for a recreational data program that earns the confidence of anglers and key constituencies in the recreational fishing community. The MRIP Communications and Education Team conducted an "MRIP Road Show" this year to work on building this confidence by talking with recreational anglers about MRIP and improvements we're making, and gathering their feedback on these initiatives and the way we talk about them.

In past Newscasts, we summarized our trips to New Jersey in April and Florida in May. Most recently, the MRIP Communications and Education Team (CET) visited Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island in September to talk with recreational anglers, state partners, and others about the progress MRIP is making and our plans for the future.

The team shared outreach materials and discussed the best methods for reaching out to recreational anglers with Sea Grant Extension Agents from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York, and representatives from Rhode Island's Department of Environmental

Management, and Connecticut's Department of Environmental and Energy Protection Recreational Angler Panel. The CET also sat down with members from the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association and recreational anglers in Sandwich, MA, and held two formal focus groups with anglers to talk about improvements MRIP is making to the way it collects and reports recreational data, and how that affects anglers.

Each of these discussions provided keen insight into how MRIP can most effectively communicate about the improvements we've made and will make in the future with anglers from a variety of backgrounds. Moving forward, the CET will combine the feedback gathered during meetings in New England with the information gathered on the listening tours to New Jersey and Florida earlier this year. Based on this feedback, the CET will develop a suite of outreach materials that will include a presentation, handouts, and card-sized handouts that can be used and distributed by all of our stakeholders. The materials will explain what MRIP is, how it's improving recreational fishing data and reporting, and how that fits into the larger context of responsible marine stewardship.

The CET plans to continue our series of listening tours on the West Coast in 2013.

### **Report released on the uses and limitations on data collected from community monitoring programs**

As new technologies make it easier than ever for individual anglers to share their catch information, many recreational anglers are interested in providing information about their fishing trips and what they're catching outside of our existing surveys. MRIP and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) co-hosted a workshop in February 2012 to look at the uses and limitations of these types of data.

A report summarizing the discussions and findings from the workshop is now available on MRIP's website at [www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov). The report explains that, while "opt-in" information can be highly useful for some applications, it is not appropriate for others. For example, the report notes that data from community monitoring programs have been "very important in developing bag/creel and size limit regulations for some states." However, the report also emphasized that it would not be appropriate for community monitoring programs to replace the current system of catch and effort surveys. Community monitoring programs differ from our current catch and effort surveys, which use statistically rigorous procedures to randomly select participants. This ensures that the individuals we sample are representative of the entire population of anglers.

The workshop brought together a panel of NOAA Fisheries representatives; state, council and commission partners; state and regional environmental non-governmental organizations; charter captains; private anglers; and technical experts to examine the uses of data gathered from community monitoring programs. Community monitoring programs are designed to collect information from anglers who choose to submit their catch and activity using a logbook or electronic reporting system.

As part of the workshop, the MAFMC compiled a [collection of community monitoring programs](#) operated both by states and independent organizations along the Atlantic and Florida Gulf coasts. Information on the use of data collected from these programs, and considerations for using such data, are detailed in the [workshop report](#).

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### **In the Next Newscast:**

Next month's newscast will feature a response to questions from Capt. Monty Hawkins.

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### **Ask MRIP**

Do you have questions about MRIP or our surveys? Ask us and we'll answer your question in an upcoming newsletter. If you've got a question about MRIP that you'd like answered, please e-mail Leah Sharpe at [Leah.Sharpe@noaa.gov](mailto:Leah.Sharpe@noaa.gov).

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