Counting on Anglers

Hundreds of thousands of saltwater anglers share important information about their fishing activity with NOAA Fisheries’ Marine Recreational Information Program each year. Your fishing data play a key role in keeping fish stocks healthy for generations to come.

EACH YEAR:
Our state partners on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and in Hawaii gather information from about 100,000 fishing trips.

About 300,000 households receive our fishing activity survey in the mail.
**How Do We Use Your Data?**

NOAA Fisheries’ Marine Recreational Information Program is the state-regional-federal partnership that develops and implements a suite of surveys to measure catch rate—the number of fish anglers catch per trip—and effort—the number of trips anglers take. We use these numbers to estimate total recreational catch: the number of fish, by species, that anglers catch, keep, and release.

State and federal stock assessment scientists use these recreational catch estimates to inform their understanding of stock size and sustainable harvest levels. Fisheries managers use this information to set regulations that help ensure access to fishing and promote the long-term health of our fish populations.

**Step 1: Collect Data.** Our recreational fishing surveys are tailored by state, region, fishing mode (shore, private boat, and for-hire vessel), and fish species, which allows us to collect high-quality data from across the recreational fishing community. Anglers may be sampled at a public marina, beach, or other fishing access site. Anglers may also receive our household fishing activity survey in the mail.

**Step 2: Produce Estimates.** Once we check the fishing information we collect for potential errors or unusual results, we apply statistical weights to each angler interview and each completed mail survey. This ensures each sampled unit is properly represented in our final estimates. Then, we multiply catch rate by effort to estimate total recreational catch. These estimates are available by geographic region, fishing mode, species, and area fished.

**Step 3: Publish Estimates.** Scientists, managers, and the public can search, view, and download our recreational catch estimates through the MRIP Query Tool at countmyfish.noaa.gov. Each estimate is published with a measure of its statistical precision, which indicates how confident we can be that the point estimate reflects true catch.

**Step 4: Use Estimates.** Our recreational catch estimates inform the science-based management of fish stocks across the United States.

**Why Haven’t I Been Surveyed?**

It’s not possible or practical to collect information from each of the millions of recreational anglers fishing along our coasts. That’s why NOAA Fisheries uses sample surveys: a proven method of collecting information from a randomly selected and representative sample of the recreational fishing community. Just as businesses, non-profit organizations, and other government agencies use sample surveys to conduct social, demographic, health, and market research, we use statistically sound probability sampling methods that make sure the anglers we do survey reflect the broader recreational fishing community.

**Why Is This Important?**

Our understanding of saltwater recreational catch depends on the complete and accurate information we collect from anglers like you. Taking a few minutes to tell us about your fishing trip is one of the most important things you can do to support fisheries science, management, and the sustainability of a great American pastime.

*Your Fishing Counts*

countmyfish.noaa.gov