

**2018**



**PROCEDURES MANUAL**

## I. Introduction

The National Marine Fisheries Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries) is required to conduct surveys of marine recreational fishing. The For-Hire Survey specifically gathers information on fishing effort (number of angler trips) and catch by marine recreational anglers fishing on for-hire (charter boat and headboat) vessels.

Catch, effort, and participation statistics are fundamental for assessing the influence of fishing on any stock of fish. The quantities taken, the fishing effort, and the seasonal and geographical distribution of the catch and effort are required for the development of rational management policies and plans. Recreational fisheries data are essential for NOAA Fisheries, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, State resource management agencies, recreational fishing industries, and others involved in the management and productivity of marine fisheries. The allocation of many fishery resources depends on the results of these surveys.

The FHS consists of two independent, yet complementary surveys, a vessel-directory telephone survey to assess fishing effort, and an access-point intercept survey to assess catch per-unit of effort. Data from the two surveys are combined to estimate total fishing effort and catch by species.

The telephone survey portion of the FHS will be conducted for all Atlantic Coast states from Maine through Georgia. It should be noted that during this period, the FHS will overlap with other charter and headboat monitoring programs. These other programs include the Northeast (Maine-Virginia) Vessel Trip Reporting Program (VTR), the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey (SERHS), various state logbook programs, and other Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) projects, such as the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (formerly known as the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS)). In some cases, these programs have been integrated with the FHS to reduce reporting burden. NOAA Fisheries will provide information on each of these other programs upon request.

## II. Duration of the FHS

QuanTech is responsible for conducting the FHS on the Atlantic coast from Virginia to New Hampshire and in South Carolina. The FHS is conducted by the state natural resources agencies in North Carolina and Maine. Currently, the FHS is conducted weekly on a 10-month basis (March-December) in all Atlantic coast states from South Carolina through Massachusetts. In New Hampshire, it is conducted on an 8-month basis (March-October) for headboat and a 6-month basis (May-October) for charter boats. In Maine, it is conducted on a 6-month basis (May-October). NOAA Fisheries may expand the temporal coverage of the FHS to include additional waves for some states. The weekly wave assignments for the FHS 2018 are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Weekly Wave Assignments  
for the FHS 2018**

<b>Wave</b>	<b>Week</b>	<b>Begin date</b>	<b>End date</b>
1	1	1/1/2018	1/7/2018
1	2	1/8/2018	1/14/2018
1	3	1/15/2018	1/21/2018
1	4	1/22/2018	1/28/2018
1	5	1/29/2018	2/4/2018
1	6	2/5/2018	2/11/2018
1	7	2/12/2018	2/18/2018
1	8	2/19/2018	2/25/2018
2	9	2/26/2018	3/4/2018
2	10	3/5/2018	3/11/2018
2	11	3/12/2018	3/18/2018
2	12	3/19/2018	3/25/2018
2	13	3/26/2018	4/1/2018
2	14	4/2/2018	4/8/2018
2	15	4/9/2018	4/15/2018
2	16	4/16/2018	4/22/2018
2	17	4/23/2018	4/29/2018
3	18	4/30/2018	5/6/2018
3	19	5/7/2018	5/13/2018
3	20	5/14/2018	5/20/2018
3	21	5/21/2018	5/27/2018
3	22	5/28/2018	6/3/2018
3	23	6/4/2018	6/10/2018
3	24	6/11/2018	6/17/2018
3	25	6/18/2018	6/24/2018
3	26	6/25/2018	7/1/2018
4	27	7/2/2018	7/8/2018
4	28	7/9/2018	7/15/2018
4	29	7/16/2018	7/22/2018
4	30	7/23/2018	7/29/2018
4	31	7/30/2018	8/5/2018
4	32	8/6/2018	8/12/2018
4	33	8/13/2018	8/19/2018
4	34	8/20/2018	8/26/2018
4	35	8/27/2018	9/2/2018
5	36	9/3/2018	9/9/2018
5	37	9/10/2018	9/16/2018

**Table 1. Weekly Wave Assignments  
for the FHS 2018**

<b>Wave</b>	<b>Week</b>	<b>Begin date</b>	<b>End date</b>
5	38	9/17/2018	9/23/2018
5	39	9/24/2018	9/30/2018
5	40	10/1/2018	10/7/2018
5	41	10/8/2018	10/14/2018
5	42	10/15/2018	10/21/2018
5	43	10/22/2018	10/28/2018
6	44	10/29/2018	11/4/2018
6	45	11/5/2018	11/11/2018
6	46	11/12/2018	11/18/2018
6	47	11/19/2018	11/25/2018
6	48	11/26/2018	12/2/2018
6	49	12/3/2018	12/9/2018
6	50	12/10/2018	12/16/2018
6	51	12/17/2018	12/23/2018
6	52	12/24/2018	12/30/2018

### III. Advance Letters

QuanTech must mail an advance letter to the representative of each selected vessel one week prior to the week for which the vessel was selected to report (sample week). The letter will notify the representative of the vessel's selection for the survey, the week for which he or she will be asked to provide data, and the week in which the interview will take place. Included with the letter will be a logsheet which will serve as one of the alternate reporting methods for the survey.

Representatives will also be provided with web, fax and phone contact information, as well as instructions for completing the survey through alternative reporting modes (See section VII below).

**Use the instructions provided by your Supervisor to create the advance letters.**

### IV. Calling Times

For the FHS (and therefore, the LPTS Add-on), a daytime call attempt is defined as a call attempt made between 7:00 am EST and 4:59 PM EST; an evening call attempt is made between 5:00 PM EST and 8:00 PM EST. **No call attempts should be made outside these time limits.**

### V. Data Collection

As previously mentioned, data collection shall be conducted on a weekly basis during all weeks within each wave. A week is defined as Monday through Sunday. All weekly dialing should be completed during the week following a specified week of fishing (Monday-Sunday).

Respondents will be asked to report angler and vessel fishing activity for the prior week that ended on a Sunday. This approach results in a recall period of 7-14 days for all respondents.

All interviewing shall be done through a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. Before interviewing begins each week, the data management staff must update the CATI. **On Mondays, do not begin dialing until the Data Management Staff completes the weekly update.**

### VI. Dialing Procedures

Once a vessel has been selected, at least ten attempts must be made to contact that vessel's representative. Telephone calls must be made during the time of day that maximizes the potential to contact vessel operators. All first attempts should be made the first day, and repeat attempts should be distributed among weekend/weekday and day/evening time periods as listed below. At least five additional attempts must be made to reach each representative once a phone contact with a co-resident has been made. When each number is dialed, the telephone should be allowed to ring five times before being classified as a "no answer." Interviewers should continue

to attempt to contact vessel representatives until they have conducted an interview, determined that the boat is no longer operating, or made ten attempts.

The pattern of dialing for each number should include at least three daytime attempts and seven night attempts. The time separating day and night is 5:00 PM (local time for the area being called). No calls should be attempted after 8:00 PM (local time). Once a vessel representative is contacted, future calls to that individual should be made on an appointment basis if the interview cannot be completed at the time of initial contact.

When a given vessel is selected for telephone sampling, the Interviewer should first attempt to contact the principal representative at each of his/her listed phone numbers. If it is determined for certain that the principal representative will not be available during the dialing period (ie. sick, on vacation), rather than immediately coding "Respondent not available during dialing week", or "RD", the Interviewer should attempt to contact one or more other known owners or operators of the vessel in question (using additional phone numbers or contacts from the vessel directory) during the week. However, if there are no alternate Vessel Representatives, the attempt should be coded as "RD"; the telephone number will not be attempted again during the dialing week.

If the interview cannot be completed at the time of initial contact, or a Gate Keeper or co-resident indicates a better day and/or time to call back, future calls will be made on an appointment basis. The call attempt that resulted in the identification of a better date and/or time to call back will be coded as a "scheduled call back", or "CB". If a better time to reach the Vessel Representative cannot be determined, the attempt will be coded as "call back anytime", or "CA".

If an answering machine picks up after 5 or fewer rings, the call attempt will be recorded as "answering machine" or "AM". If the first call attempt to a FHS Vessel Representative is answered by a machine, the Interviewer should leave a message for the respondent. Messages should not be left on answering machines on subsequent calls. Interviewers may leave the following message for the respondent:

"Hello, this is [INTERVIEWER NAME] calling from QuanTech on behalf of NOAA Fisheries for the For-Hire Survey. I'll be trying to reach you this week concerning the activity of the [VESSEL NAME] or you can reach me on 800-229-5220."

Although most Vessel Representatives answer their own calls, some are only accessible after the Interviewer provides an introduction of themselves and the FHS to a Gate Keeper. Interviewers should introduce themselves to Gate Keepers in a manner most likely to induce them to get the Vessel Representative on the line. Tactics may include mentioning the vessel name or explaining why we are calling. For example, an Interviewer may explain, "I'm calling about the [VESSEL NAME] on behalf of the National Marine Fisheries Service". Interviewers should listen to the beginning of answering machine messages to determine if it is possible to reach the respondent through a phone tree option (e.g., "Press 1 for an employee directory or 0 to speak with an operator").

If an Interviewer calls a telephone number and gets a normal busy signal, the Interviewer will code the attempt as “BZ”. If the Interviewer gets a fast busy or a message indicating the number is out of service, the Interviewer will dial the number again before coding as a “bad number” or “BD”. If a message indicates that the number is disconnected and includes the number in the message, the Interviewer will not call the number again before coding as “BD”.

Some Gate Keepers and Vessel Representatives have mistaken our calls for telemarketing calls and made false “wrong number” claims. If someone answers the phone, but informs the Interviewer that there is no one there with the name of the respondent, the Interviewer will introduce themselves and explain that they are calling about the vessel, and if necessary, confirm the telephone number with the person who answered to make certain that the number was dialed correctly. If the number was dialed correctly and no eligible respondent for the vessel is ever at that number, the number will be coded as “wrong number”, or "WN". Interviewers will attempt to find new telephone numbers to contact the Vessel Representative.

If the Interviewer has an eligible, willing, Vessel Representative on the phone, the Interviewer will conduct the survey using the CATI. The Interviewer will code each response appropriately and ask each question carefully to elicit the correct response. If the Interviewer is unsure whether the respondent answered the question correctly, the Interviewer will probe to obtain proper response. If the Vessel Representative indicates that the vessel is inactive (e.g. out of season, being fixed, etc.), the vessel will be coded as such, and the month and year in which activity will resume will be recorded. If the vessel had any activity, each trip will be profiled (the term used for the collection of trip-level information) according to survey specifications.

Situations that require delicate handling include interviews with many trips, refusal conversion, and respondents with questions or concerns about the survey. To avoid testing the Vessel Representative’s patience, or even losing an interview, it is important for the Interviewer to react appropriately in these situations.

### Interviews with many trips

When there are multiple similar trips to report, respondent fatigue can be a concern on the FHS and LPTS. QuanTech designed the CATI so Interviewers can quickly record responses to the survey questions.

Some Vessel Representatives (usually those reporting 5 or more trips), however, do not want to spend the time on the phone to allow the Interviewer to methodically enter data in the CATI. In such cases, even the CATI’s capability to repeat trip information cannot be used fast enough by an Interviewer. For example, a certain Vessel Representative, who is contacted frequently and typically reports more than 5 trips per week, is very familiar with the survey. Upon contact, he provides all the survey information without even being prompted, though he sometimes needs to be reminded to provide information on non-fishing trips (e.g. for fuel, sightseeing, etc.). As a practical matter, the CATI cannot be used without annoying this Vessel Representative, so it is better to record data on a logsheet during the telephone call and then enter the data in the CATI.

Interviewers that utilize a logsheet to record the data in the interest of time must take great care with this procedure. Before ending the call, probing will be attempted by the Interviewer to tease out any differences between trips. At the end of any call when the Interviewer utilizes a paper logsheet, the Interviewer will ask if it will be acceptable to call back if they have any other questions. Our experience has been that Vessel Representatives have rarely denied permission to call back. Furthermore, callbacks have seldom been necessary because the Interviewers are very familiar with the questionnaire. The method helps build rapport and ensures future survey participation by way of minimizing respondent fatigue.

Another tool to use when conducting interviews with many trips is the checkbox in the CATI that states, “NOTE: ONLY CHECK THIS BUTTON IF RESPONDENT CLAIMS THAT THIS TRIP IS THE SAME AS THE LAST TRIP INFORMATION GIVEN”. When a respondent took a series of very similar trips this check box can be used. Clicking it and starting a new trip will copy the trip information from the previous trip into the new trip. The interviewer will then verify the pre-entered trip information on the new trip to make sure all of it matches. This is important to do because there are sometimes small differences between the trips that will be realized and corrected once the information is verified.

### Exceptions

During the course of telephone interviewing new information (e.g. the vessel is inactive, there is a new contact for the vessel, etc.) may come to our attention. It is imperative that this information be corrected in case that the Vessel Representative is sampled again in the Wave. Likewise, when coding errors are made, Interviewers must document the corrections, or “Exceptions”, that need to be made to the data.

Most updates to vessel information can be handled in the “Exceptions” database. This is linked to the CATI on the switchboard by clicking the button “Vessel Directory Update”. The “Exceptions” database will handle almost all of the vessel updates. Unusual vessel updates and coding errors that occurred during an interview that has been completed should be recorded in the “Exceptions” spreadsheet. Contained in the “Exceptions” spreadsheet are: vessel record information, reporting period, details on the necessary correction, initials of the staff member who logged the exception, Data Manager action, and the Data Manager initials. Notify the call center supervisor of any coding errors ASAP as they may affect the dialing pattern for the week and may need to be rectified promptly.

### Refusal Conversion

Another important aspect of interviewing procedures is overcoming respondent resistance and discouraging refusals. If the person who answers the phone hangs up before the Interviewer can explain the purpose of the call, the Interviewer should call again. If the person hangs up twice, the Interviewer will not call again and the call will be recorded as a “hang up” or “HU”.

Interviewers should be courteous and professional to all respondents, even if they are hostile. If the Vessel Representative does not want to complete the interview at that time, then the Interviewer will try to schedule a better time to call back to complete the interview. If a Vessel Representative refuses to complete the survey, the Interviewer will attempt to convert the refusal by explain the purpose of the call. The Interviewers should explain the impact of data collection on resource management (e.g., NOAA Fisheries will receive high quality data as a result of compliance with the survey) and HMS reporting requirements (e.g. If the vessel has an HMS permit, then the survey is an important step toward fulfilling HMS reporting requirements.), so they can give such information to the respondent in an attempt to prevent a refusal. If possible, the Interviewer should complete the interview. However, if the Vessel Representative continues to refuse, the Interviewer should code the interview as a "hard refusal", or "RF". If provided, the reason why the Vessel Representative refuses to participate in the survey will be recorded. If the Vessel Representative is verbally abusive or speaks to the Interviewer inappropriately the Interview should hang-up the telephone, record all of the details of the interaction, and notify their supervisor. Verbally abusive Vessel Representatives will be reported to NOAA Fisheries.

#### Respondents with questions or concerns about the survey

Interviewers should also be familiar with proper responses to questions or concerns. Utilize the NOAA Fisheries-provided For-Hire Survey FAQs to explain the FHS. Some of the FAQs address common concerns among Vessel Representatives who also submit Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) to the Northeast Regional Office. These Vessel Representatives sometimes believe their trips will be counted twice if they participate in both the FHS and the VTR program. Our Interviewers will explain the differences between the FHS and the VTR program as written in the For-Hire Survey FAQs in Appendix A.

We will continue to refer constituents to NOAA Fisheries to address specific concerns about the uses of the data or the design of the surveys. Interviewers will provide the name, telephone number and email address of the NOAA Fisheries FHS or LPTS representative (as appropriate).

## VII. Alternate Reporting Options

Vessel Representatives have the option of completing the FHS on a logsheet (provided from the advance mailing) or via the online Web Survey also known as the WebTool. While alternative reporting only accounts for a small percentage of the total completed surveys (around 5-10% historically), it is important that proper procedures are followed to avoid calling Vessel Representative that have already reported for the survey.

Vessel Representatives will fax completed logsheets to 877-694-8808. If a logsheet is accepted as complete for a sampled vessel, further attempts to contact the vessel shall be discontinued for that sample week. **Every effort shall be made to avoid re-contact of a vessel once it has reported via fax.**

To avoid calling a respondent who has already submitted via fax, data for the vessel must be entered in the "WebToolLog" database. Each day, Interviewers should check the fax server

email account for FHS faxes before dialing in the morning, after lunch, and before evening dialing. If the fax submission is incomplete or contains invalid information, call the vessel representative and fill in the missing/invalid information over the telephone. If the fax submission is complete, enter the PIN and the vessel's activity information in the WebToolLog. Once the PIN is entered in the WebToolLog, the vessel will not appear in the CATI.

Vessel representatives shall also have the option of submitting data via an online tool that has been developed specifically for the FHS. The tool is PIN protected through a unique sample identification number that is assigned once the sample draw has been completed for each wave. PIN numbers are included in each vessel's pre-notification letter. **Every effort shall be made to avoid re-contact of a vessel once they have reported via the web.**

To avoid calling a respondent who has already submitted via the internet, the PIN for the vessel must be entered in the "WebToolLog" database. Each day, Interviewers should check the Quantech Call Attempt Log Reporting Tool (<https://www.quantech.com/callattemptlog/htdocs/callattemptlog/>), completed web submissions are listed and should be entered before dialing. Once the PIN is entered in the WebToolLog, the vessel should not appear in the CATI, or the CATI may warn you not to call the number because data for the vessel has already been submitted.

### FHS Jargon

NOAA Fisheries – Otherwise known as the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS).

Charter Boat – A vessel that meets the requirements of the US Coast Guard to take up to six passengers fishing for a fee. This is often referred to as a 'six-pack license'. Anglers pay as a group for a half day, full day, or overnight fishing trip. A special subset of charter boats are called "guide boats". Guide boats are usually smaller vessels that take 2 or 3 passengers fishing in inland, brackish waters or in near-shore coastal waters.

Headboat (or Party Boat) – A vessel certified by the US Coast Guard to take more than 6 paying passengers fishing for a fee. Usually larger vessels than charter boats, each person pays on an individual basis or "per head", and anglers usually do not know everyone on the boat.

Vessel Representative – The person (captain, owner, or mate) that serves as the contact person for the telephone survey, typically the HMS permit holder. A "proxy" interview may also be obtained: if the person on the line is knowledgeable about the activity of the vessel for the reporting period and can provide the necessary trip-level information (e.g., number of anglers, departure and return times, target species, etc.), then the person is considered an eligible Vessel Representative and the interview is conducted.

Fishing Trip – The vessel departed a marina, dock, or launch ramp and at least one hook and line was placed in the water. If a vessel goes out searching for tuna, for example, but a fishing line never goes in the water then it is not a fishing trip.

Gatekeeper/Proxy – A secondary designated representative of the vessel; i.e. a mate, or office representative for the vessel, or a spouse.

## Telephone Interviewing Tips

*Be organized before you make the call:* Always ensure that you have all the documentation you need before you place the call. Review the information presented in the CATI before calling.

*Identify yourself:* Give your name and identify who you represent.

*Be confident:* Be confident that what you are doing is important and the respondent will want to participate. Do not use phrases such as, “if you are not too busy...” or “do you mind doing a survey...”. Use a confident tone.

*Be polite and courteous:* A pleasant voice presents a professional image. Be alert, pleasant, natural, and tactful. Use “Please” and “Thank you”.

*Use voice fluctuations:* Do not speak in monotone. Make the respondent understand that they are speaking with a person, not a machine.

*Listen carefully to what the respondent has to say:* This enables you to accurately record their response and address any concerns they may have. Do not interrupt. This makes the respondent feel as if their views are not important to you.

*Limit off-topic conversation:* If a respondent gets off-topic, politely bring them back to the point of the survey and when asked a question, give a short, concise answer.

*Do not talk to anyone else when on the phone:* This may give the respondent the impression that you are not really paying attention.

*Be accurate:* Always follow the script and instructions. Listen carefully.

*Be in control:* Ask the question with confidence and authority. If you know what you are doing you will win the confidence of the respondent.

*Be interested:* Become interested in the opinions and responses of the respondent.

*Keep calling:* The more numbers you call, the more completes you’ll get.

## Appendix A: For-Hire Survey FAQs

Q. What is the purpose of the For-Hire Survey?

A. The purpose of the For-Hire Survey (FHS) is to collect information about fishing effort on for-hire vessels. This information is used to estimate fishing effort (angler trips) on for-hire vessels.

Q. Why/How was I chosen for this survey? I just did this last week, why am I being called for it again this week?

A. A random draw of all [*for-hire vessels / private / general category HMS permitted vessel*] is pulled for the survey. It depends on how many vessels there are in your state. Participants in states with fewer vessel may be chosen more often to satisfy percentage requirements (you can also look in the SAS system to see other times the vessel was drawn for the survey, FHS/add-on only).

Q. I don't want to participate in a telephone interview. Are there other ways that I can provide data for the FHS?

A. To minimize reporting burden, we have traditionally provided captains with alternate reporting options, including online data entry (FHS webtool), faxing a completed log sheet, or faxing a completed VTR form (for federally permitted vessels). These alternate reporting options are alternatives to participating in an FHS telephone interview. They are NOT alternatives for other mandatory reporting programs (eg. if a vessel has a federal permit, it MUST submit VTRs to the NMFS Northeast Regional Office, regardless of participation in the FHS).

Q. Is all of the information on the VTR form used for the FHS?

A. No. The only information on the VTR form that is used for the FHS is the effort information, including the number of trips with paying passengers, the number of passengers on each trip, and the location (latitude and longitude) of each trip. The FHS does NOT use the catch data that are included on the VTR forms.

Q. If you don't use the catch data I provide on the VTR form, how do you collect catch data?

A. Catch data (catch per trip) are collected by field staff during dockside or at-sea interviews with for-hire anglers.

Q. I'm asked to provide target species for the FHS. How is this used to estimate catch?

A. Targeted species information is NOT used to estimate catch. This information is used to provide some general characteristics about for-hire fishing activity. For example, what percentage of for-hire trips targeted striped bass?

Q. What is the purpose of the VTR program?

A. For for-hire vessels, the purpose of the VTR program is to track historical participation in a fishery.

Q. Is this survey a requirement?

A. If your vessel holds an HMS permit, the survey is part of the reporting requirements for holding that permit. The survey is voluntary if your vessel does not hold an HMS permit.

*[We do not state the survey is a requirement unless asked by the respondent. All vessels in the LPTS survey have HMS permits, and are therefore required to participate.]*