



NOAA FISHERIES

Marine Recreational Information Program

The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is the state-regional-federal partnership responsible for developing, improving, and implementing surveys that measure how many trips recreational anglers take and how many fish they catch.

Measuring Recreational Catch: The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey

How does NOAA Fisheries collect information about recreational catch?

From Maine to Mississippi and in Hawaii, state agencies work with the Marine Recreational Information Program to conduct angler interviews at public fishing access sites. These interviews are part of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS), and inform our estimates of total recreational catch.

To conduct the APAIS, specially trained field interviewers visit marinas, boat ramps, beaches, and piers, and survey anglers as they complete their fishing trips. Interviewers weigh and measure fish that were harvested, and collect information about fish that were released. State agencies coordinate in-person, on-site data collection, while regional fisheries information networks provide data storage and quality control. Interviewers play no role in law enforcement, and must keep the information anglers share confidential.

How many anglers are surveyed each year? What happens to the information they share?

In 2019, field interviewers intercepted about 95,000 angler trips on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and about 2,800 angler trips in Hawaii. Data from our catch surveys are combined with data from our effort surveys to produce an estimate of total recreational catch. These estimates are combined with commercial catch data, biological research, and information collected from direct observations of fisheries to help scientists assess the health of fish stocks. Through a public process that includes angler input, fisheries managers use these assessments to set fishing regulations that balance access to the resource with maintaining its sustainability.

How does this survey benefit me?

Our understanding of saltwater recreational catch depends on complete and accurate data provided by recreational anglers. Taking a few minutes to share information about your fishing trip is one of the most important contributions

you can make to fisheries science, management, and the sustainability of a great American pastime. When you share information about your fishing trip with field interviewers, you are playing an important role in supporting sustainable fishing opportunities.

How do interviewers decide where to go?

Field interviewers are assigned to visit public fishing access sites during specific times of day. We use standard statistical methods to select sites that will produce a representative sample of fishing trips.

What is an interviewer's daily assignment like?

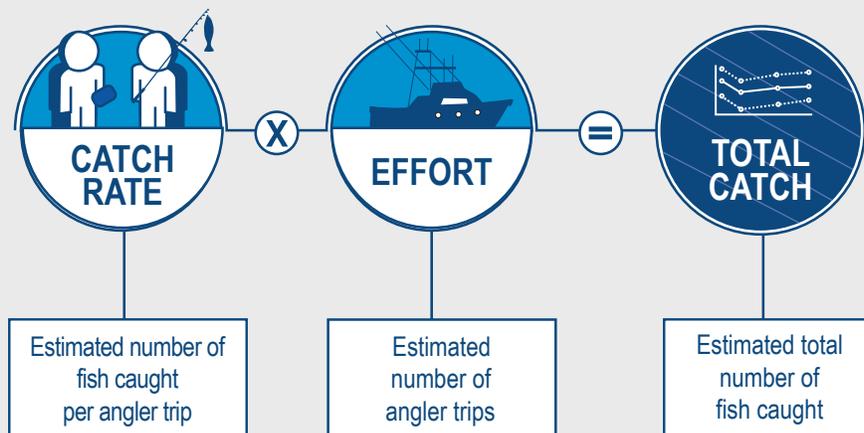
Field interviewers conduct surveys during all times of day, and work the entire length of their six-hour assignment. This means you may see an interviewer at night, or working at a site where fishing activity is low.

Each sampling assignment includes a date, a time interval, one or two sites that should be sampled, and the order in which these sites should be visited.



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How do you use the APAIS to estimate total catch?



While the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey is used to collect data about the number of fish anglers catch, the Fishing Effort Survey and For-Hire Survey are used to collect data about the number of trips anglers take. Three additional surveys, known collectively as the Large Pelagics Survey, collect recreational catch and effort data for tuna, sharks, billfishes, swordfish, and other offshore species. Catch and effort data are combined to estimate total catch, which informs scientific stock assessments and the public process of setting rules and regulations to support healthy and productive recreational fisheries.

Why do interviewers work at sites where fishing activity is low?

Strict adherence to survey design is critical to collecting statistically sound data. This means field interviewers must follow their predetermined schedule until their work for the day is complete.

While field interviewers do not work when the weather poses a threat to their safety, they do work when the weather is bad or when fishing activity is low. Documenting low-activity sites gives us a complete picture of what's happening—or not—on the water.

Why do interviewers survey anglers who didn't catch any fish?

Our sample needs to be representative of all saltwater fishing trips, regardless of how many fish, if any, were caught. If we only sampled trips where anglers caught fish, our catch estimates would be biased (and likely, too high).

Why do interviewers survey anglers who are visiting from out of town?

Interviewing both resident and visiting anglers ensures our sample is representative of all saltwater fishing trips. It also gives us the information we need to adjust the effort data we collect through our mail survey of coastal households. In other words, if we didn't use the APAIS to gather information from

out-of-state residents, we wouldn't be able to account for the fish those anglers catch or the trips they take.

Why does it matter what one angler reports?

The success of our surveys relies on the participation of the people we sample. Because it's not practical or possible for us to intercept the millions of recreational anglers fishing along the coast, each trip we do sample may represent dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of trips.

Why should I participate more than once?

Even if you've been surveyed before, the unique characteristics of your most recent fishing trip haven't been incorporated into our data. No two fishing trips are alike, and our survey is designed to capture those differences.

Why haven't I been interviewed?

With millions of fishing trips taking place each year, it's not possible to intercept every trip that occurs or to gather information from every angler who fishes. While no two fishing trips are the same, the statistical process that drives the selection of sampling sites ensures the anglers we do interview are representative of the wider recreational fishing community.

What can I do to help?

If you're asked to participate in a recreational fishing survey, we encourage you to provide complete and accurate information, even if you didn't fish, or didn't catch anything. This will help us produce more accurate estimates of recreational catch. You can also encourage other anglers to participate in recreational fishing surveys; voice your support for state, regional, and national data collection programs; or get involved in fisheries management through your state marine fisheries agency, interstate marine fisheries commission, or regional fishery management council.