

NEWSCAST

MARINE
RECREATIONAL
INFORMATION
PROGRAM



YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE FOR FISHING DATA

An update for members and partners of the new Marine Recreational Information Program

MAY 2008

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **From the Chairman's Desk**
- **New Website Launched**
- **Workshop Aims to Improve Understanding of Angler Surveys**
- **Regional Listening Sessions Continue**
- **Work Group Updates**
- **Media Bites**
- **Upcoming Events**

FULL STORIES

From the Chairman's Desk

There's growing anticipation about what the new system of surveys will look like. While we're right to focus on these improvements, it's important we don't forget the fundamental underpinnings of survey design. One of the oft-overlooked deficiencies pointed out in the National Research Council review centered on the public lacking even a basic understanding of how angler data are collected and used to generate estimates that are used for stock assessments and setting management measures.

Public confidence in MRIP depends upon raising this base level of knowledge because many of the survey improvements will be grounded in basic survey methods. Think about it. Our challenges go far beyond just increasing sample sizes. Our new program must address the potential biases associated with not interviewing anglers who fish from private access points or at night. We must identify information bottlenecks and data requirements that would allow for more timely estimates. Grasping the importance of these and other improvements rests on knowing the difference between a survey and a census, the role of phone interviews and in-person intercepts, sampling frequencies, and so on.

As you'll read below, we recently hosted a constituent workshop aimed at addressing these and other basics of survey and estimation methodology. Our favorable post-workshop evaluations reinforced the NRC's observation that this is both an area of need and topic of interest among constituents. So even as we look forward to future improvements, let's remember that a key ingredient in our success is ensuring more people understand these sampling fundamentals.

John Boreman
Chair, Executive Steering Committee

New MRIP Website Launched

After several months of development, we're pleased to unveil a fresh, more user-friendly website for the initiative. The content has been expanded to include more information on work groups, survey design, and breaking news. Improved navigation ensures visitors will be able to find

information more easily. As with all websites, this new site will be dynamic and regularly updated to serve as the source for information about the MRIP initiative. Visit the new site at www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mrip and please share your comments with us on ways to keep improving the website.

Workshop Helps Improve Understanding of Angler Surveys

Last week, twenty-five anglers from thirteen different states joined with state partners and NOAA Fisheries staff to talk data collection, analysis, and uses at a two-day workshop in Alexandria, Virginia. Understanding how angler data are gathered and analyzed is critical to making more informed choices about today's fishery management decisions. Improving this understanding was a critical need identified in the National Research Council's 2006 review of survey methods. Workshop topics ranged from quality control of the survey data to creation of estimates to the use of angler data in stock assessments. The group also received previews of the MRIP initiative and data needs for future management including Annual Catch Limits. Remarkd one participant, "I now feel much better about the data than before."

Listening Sessions Continue

In the months leading up to the summer release of the new Marine Recreational Information Program framework, members of the initiative have been visiting coastal regions to meet with interested parties about ways to improve saltwater recreational fishing data. These listening sessions offer an opportunity for NOAA Fisheries representatives to listen and learn from the Agency's science and management partners about each region's specific data and management needs.

This past month, listening sessions were held for the West Coast states in La Jolla, California and for the northeast during a joint meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program. Listening sessions for the Caribbean and Alaska are tentatively scheduled for June.

Each session included meetings with staff from NOAA Fisheries Regional Office and Science Centers, the regional Fishery Management Council, Interstate Marine Fisheries Commission, and the State fish and wildlife department.

Summary notes from each meeting will be posted on the new MRIP website.

MRIP Briefings

In addition to the listening sessions, MRIP was highlighted at a number of meetings within the past month including the American Boating Congress, Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference, and the Council Chairs Coordinating Committee meeting.

Work Group Updates

Kickoff Meeting

The members of the "Estimation Procedures Match Sample Design" project team of the Design and Analysis Work Group met in Silver Spring (NOAA) on May 13-14 with 2 of our statistical consultants, Drs. Jean Opsomer and Jay Breidt of Colorado State University. Members of the workgroup presented documentation on theoretical design, sampling implementation and analytical methods for the major recreational fishing surveys across the country. Thanks to Han-Lin Lai (MRFSS), John Foster (LPS), Wade Van Buskirk (Pacific RecFIN) and Stuart Allen (Hawaii and Western Pacific Surveys).

Our consultants then made an informal presentation of the elements of sampling design and analysis that they found most problematic and led a discussion of possible approaches. They will produce a written report with their ideas by mid-June, and the work group plans to teleconference with them in late June to discuss their report and "next steps".

Independent Expertise Added

In addition, several work groups are bringing on board independent consultants as experts in the survey design to further inform the project work. The Design and Analysis Group hired Drs. Mike Brick (Westat) and Lynne Stokes (Southern Methodist University) to work on the angler license frames (dual-frame methodology) project. The work group has also bolstered its membership with Drs. Virginia Lesser (Oregon State University) and John Skalski (University of Washington) specifically to address coverage of angling populations (private access and night fishing).

New Data Collection Underway

Two Highly Migratory Species work group pilot projects recently begun new data collection. A new for-hire survey and private boat survey are being used to better characterize HMS fisheries in Florida.

Media Bites – MRIP in the News

A profile of the Pacific Islands listening session authored by Communication and Education Team member Nicole Bartlett is featured in the May issue of *Hawaii Fishing News*. The issue also premieres a new Hawaii MRIP advertisement.

An April 22nd article in the *Press of Atlantic City* (NJ) discussed the impact an angler registry may have on fishermen in the Mid-Atlantic.

Angler Registry team leader Gordon Colvin is quoted in an April 30th *Suffolk Life* (NY) article about the upcoming registration requirement.

The possibility of Massachusetts enacting a saltwater fishing license is discussed in a May 11th article from the *South Coast Today* newspaper.

See an article about MRIP in the news? Please share it with us by contacting Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov.

Upcoming Events

Members of the Executive Steering Committee, teams, and work groups are hitting the road each month to brief partners and constituents about the Marine Recreational Information Program initiative. Below are only a few of the meetings and events.

May Events

- Data Review Workshop
- Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference
- Joint Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program workshop
- Council Chairs Coordinating Committee Meeting

June Events

- Alaska Region Listening Session
- Caribbean Region Listening Session
- Fishery Management Council Meetings (Gulf, New England, South Atlantic, North Pacific, Western Pacific)

Click www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mrip for a complete schedule of upcoming briefings. If you're interested in inviting a representative of the initiative to provide a briefing to your organization, please contact Forbes Darby.

Newscast updates are e-mailed monthly to NOAA Fisheries, state natural resource agencies, marine fisheries commissions, fishery management councils and members of the sportfishing community with an interest in the initiative to improve saltwater recreational fishing information. For more information, contact Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov or by phone at (301) 713-9501.