

# Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey

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The Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS) was developed in the late 1970's to "...establish a reliable data base for estimating the impact of marine recreational fishing on marine resources." The survey is conducted in Puerto Rico and all coastal states except Alaska, Hawaii and Texas. Texas and Alaska conduct their own surveys. It is a two-part survey—a telephone survey of coastal counties and an intercept survey of anglers at fishing access sites. The following information is collected by the respective surveys:

- **Telephone household survey**—presence of marine recreational anglers in the household, number of anglers per household, number of fishing trips in 2 month period, type of each trip (e.g. shore) and county of each trip.
- **Intercept survey**—number, weight and length of fish by species, state and county of residence, number of trips per year, type of fishing (e.g. party boat) and the primary area of fishing.

The data from the two surveys is combined to produce estimates of effort, catch and participation. The estimates are calculated for six two-month periods (waves), since studies showed that recall of fishing trips in the telephone household survey

became less reliable at longer time periods.

Now that you know a little about how the survey is conducted, let's look at some numbers. There were 69,200 angler interviews and 170,000 telephone surveys conducted along the East Coast in 2000.

An estimated 10.0 million anglers made 67.3 million fishing trips. New Jersey ranked third in the number of fishermen—961,000. The east coast of Florida ranked first with 2.2 million, followed by North Carolina with 1.8 million. Fifty-seven percent of those fishing in New Jersey were residents. Florida also had more resident (61%) than non-resident anglers. In North Carolina, the opposite was true with 66% of the anglers being non-residents. When it comes to the number of fishing trips these fishermen made, New Jersey is second with 6.3 million to Florida's 11.2 million trips. Keep in mind that New Jersey only has about 127 miles of ocean shoreline, compared to Florida's 1,800 miles. More anglers fished from private/rental boats (58%), than from party or charter boats (8%). Thirty-four percent fished from the shore, including beaches, jetties and bridges. Fifty-six percent of the trips took place in the ocean, the rest occurred in our bays, sounds

and tidal rivers. Most of the ocean fishing was done in state waters, that is within three miles of the shore.

What were the results of all those people making all those fishing trips in our state? For six species, we ranked first in total weight and number harvested. These were: black sea bass, bluefish, summer flounder, tautog, weakfish and winter flounder. Our striped bass harvest was second to Maryland for the number of fish, but first overall in weight. The Atlantic croaker, which was rare in our waters for a long time, has been making a comeback in the last decade. The 1993 harvest was estimated at 2550 fish. By 2000, it was 992,000 fish, putting us third in number and weight behind the Chesapeake states of Maryland and Virginia. Table 1 shows how we compared with other states for ten species.

You can access the information contained in this article and much more online at [www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/recreational](http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/recreational).

#### References:

Personal communication from the National Marine Fisheries Services, Fisheries Statistics and Economics Divisions, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Table 1. Number Of Fish (Thousands) Harvested By States In 2000 (MRFSS).

	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC	SC	GA	FL
<b>Atlantic Croaker</b>						992	496	2,590	5,318	369	31	123	443
<b>Black Sea Bass</b>		64	183	14	322	1,897	146	420	435	139	72	50	100
<b>Bluefish</b>	1	214	261	373	687	1,197	125	334	145	827	83	20	427
<b>Scup</b>		1,335	1,149	1,251	2,991	173	1		3				
<b>Spot</b>					474	273	61	1,346	511	1,812	236	3	40
<b>Striped Bass</b>	4	176	89	51	259	391	38	491	324	38	0.5		
<b>Summer Flounder</b>	0.1	367	755	352	1,603	2,926	321	250	565	356	13	0.3	5
<b>Tautog</b>		85	36	10	75	451	108	19	34	5			
<b>Weakfish</b>			0.7	7	40	737	297	461	279	67	5	4	120
<b>Winter Flounder</b>	8	72	48	10	227	1,056							