

## Listening to our Readers - Results from the 2006 Marine Digest Readers' Survey

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The 2006 marine issue of this *New Jersey Fish & Wildlife Digest* included a readers' survey which generated 288 responses providing valuable insights on the interests of our readers. You told us what you like about the Digest and what you want to see in future issues. Most respondents (93%) identified themselves as recreational anglers. As expected, the majority were New Jersey residents, but respondents also hailed from states as far away as Alaska, Arizona, Utah, Ohio, Florida, South Carolina and Virginia, as well as our neighboring states of Pennsylvania and New York. All 21 counties in New Jersey were represented with Burlington, Monmouth and Ocean counties bringing in the highest numbers. Most respondents (86%) had visited the saltwater pages on our Fish and Wildlife Web site at least two to five times in the past year, while over half (51%) visited the site even more frequently.

Fish and Wildlife asked our readers to rank the major articles from the 2006 *Digest* based on how useful, interesting and enjoyable these features were to them. Garnering the highest scores were articles about (first) a research survey on striped bass in the Delaware River, (second) a report on recreational crabbing studies and (third) the addition of the Townsends Inlet Reef to New Jersey's Artificial Reef Program. These features were followed in descending order by an article on progressive enforcement techniques utilized by New Jersey's conservation officers, a species profile on American eel, an updated guide to boaters' pumpout locations and information about a research study on the American eel.

Our readers' survey also encouraged feedback on 14 topics for future consideration as well as a solicitation for open comments. Regulation changes and fishing techniques topped the list of responses, followed closely by species profiles and places to and how to Fish. Artificial reefs, stock assessment/status, habitat protection or restoration, New Jersey research



surveys and enforcement elicited the next highest group of responses. The other topics, in descending order, included shellfisheries, volunteer opportunities, management process, youth fishing and aquaculture.

Nearly 55% of respondents elaborated on their interests and concerns. Fish and shellfish species most often referenced were striped bass, summer flounder, weakfish, winter flounder, tautog, black sea bass, bluefish, black drum and blue crab. Artificial reefs were the next most cited topic, with readers requesting information on reef sites, upcoming deployments and types of fish found in these areas. Other comments included topics such as family fishing activities, boat access, fishing gear, recreational/commercial fishing interactions, charter and party boat fleets, and requests for environmental information on New Jersey's water bodies and surrounding habitats.

This *Digest* issue reflects your survey responses. For example, to enhance our regulations coverage, information on federal regulations covering fish caught off our shores is found on page 18. Also, don't miss the two features on black drum (*Species Profile: Black Drum*, page 20 and *Delaware Bay Dangerfields*, page 6) which address readers' expressed interest for coverage on species not previously highlighted in these pages.

The success of last year's questionnaire prompted us to include on our Web site ([www.NJFishandWildlife.com](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com)) a new readers' survey for this year's marine *Digest*. We hope you will participate so we may continue to improve future issues and meet the interests of those who enjoy New Jersey's valuable marine resources.

