



Attention Saltwater Anglers!

By Jeff Brust, Research Scientist

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife has implemented an angler survey to collect information on certain recreationally important marine finfish species. This voluntary survey is available online at <http://NJFishandWildlife.com/marinesurvey.htm>.

Since 1981, the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS), conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has been the primary source of recreational fisheries data in New Jersey and other coastal states throughout the U.S. Unfortunately, the MRFSS is hindered by sampling only a small portion of the fishing public and by collecting only minimal data on released fish. Although NMFS is in the process of developing an improved sampling program (Marine Recreational Information Program or MRIP), details of the new sampling program are not yet available. It may be several years before fisheries scientists can determine the utility of the data collected through MRIP.

Information collected through Fish and Wildlife's new voluntary marine angler survey will provide much-needed data to increase our understanding of New Jersey's highly valued recreational fisheries. The focus of this voluntary survey is to learn *catch* and *effort* information from fishing trips in marine and estuarine waters of the state and surrounding areas. For catch information, Fish and Wildlife is interested in collecting statistics on the number and size of fish both kept and released.

The survey was implemented in June 2008 and by the end of the year had received more than 675 responses reporting catch and effort information on more than 1,850 angler trips. The majority of responses (521) identified summer flounder as either a primary or secondary target species, with striped bass (141), bluefish (130), weakfish (89) and black seabass (85) rounding out the top five most-targeted species.

One of the more valuable benefits of this survey is the collection of lengths from released fish. The MRFSS collected no length information from released fish until 2004 when it began measuring throwbacks from a limited number of party boat trips. New Jersey's online survey allows for collection of lengths of released fish from all fishing modes and species. This information is particularly useful in understanding the population size structure and for use in population models. The figure below shows the size distribution of recreationally caught summer flounder during the 2008 fishing season.

Your participation in the survey is both important and appreciated. Fish and Wildlife is confident that quality recreational fisheries data collected through the online survey will improve our ability to manage our important marine species for continued enjoyment by recreational anglers and all user groups. Go to NJFishandWildlife.com/marinesurvey.htm

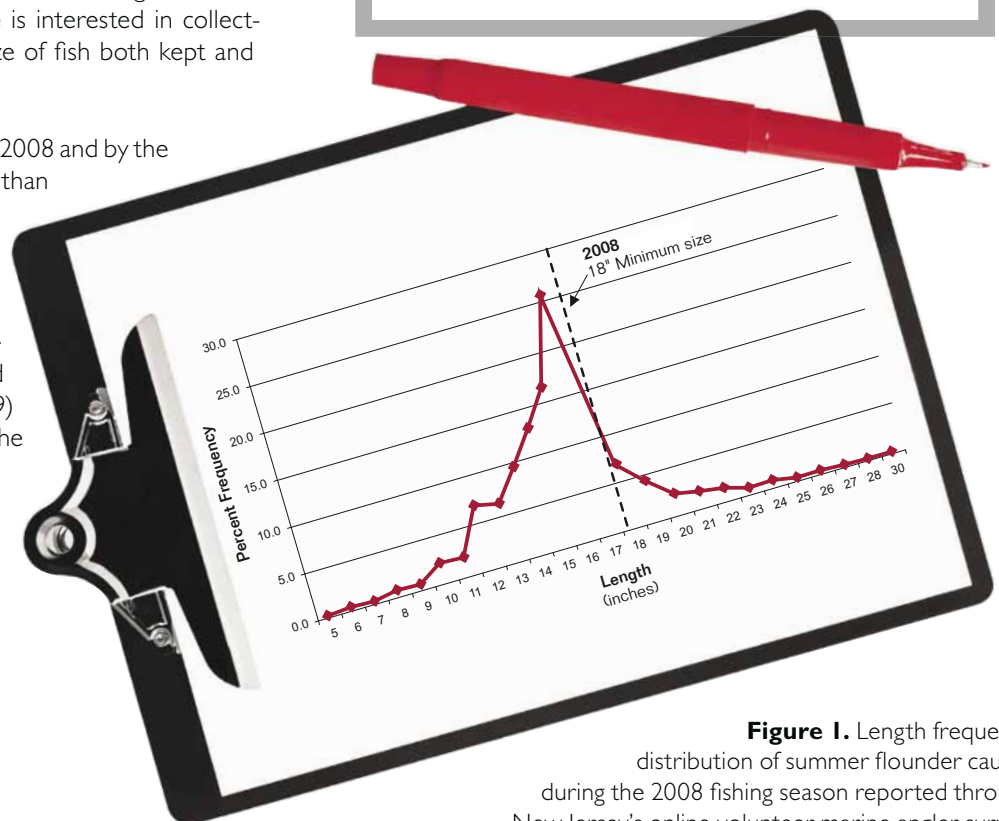


Figure 1. Length frequency distribution of summer flounder caught during the 2008 fishing season reported through New Jersey's online volunteer marine angler survey.