

Could You Be Intercepted While Fishing?

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The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) is under way. You may see our interviewers at many marine public access fishing sites throughout New Jersey.

This recreational angler survey is now conducted "in house" by each of the 13 Atlantic states from Maine to Georgia. New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is conducting this survey on behalf of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service.

The survey targets marine recreational anglers to obtain information about their fishing effort, catch and participation in marine recreational fishing and about the demographic, social and economic characteristics of those who participate in saltwater recreational fishing in United States waters.

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Hunter Jackson fishes the surf at Island Beach State Park.

Jonathan Caputo/NJ Div Fish and Wildlife

with APAIS—are collecting valuable fishing catch-and-effort data. *Your willing participation is vital* to assemble a large database which will be utilized to help manage the health and future stocks of recreationally fished species.

The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey is one of the pieces that complete the Marine Recreational Information Program puzzle. Through this program, NOAA Fisheries counts and reports marine recreational catch and effort. Driven by data provided by anglers and captains, the Marine Recreational Information Program produces better information through better science and—equally important—increased transparency, accountability and engagement. These data for marine recreational fisheries had been collected through the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey from 1979 until 2008 before being replaced by the Marine Recreational Information Program. This program was created in order to continue improving the collection, analysis and use of fishing data.

How are the Data Used?

Accurate, up-to-date angler catch, effort and participation statistics are fundamental for assessing the influence of fishing on any stock of fish. The fish quantities taken, fishing effort plus the seasonal and geographical distribution of the catch and effort are required for the development of rational management policies and plans. Continuous monitoring of

Interviewers are assigned to public fishing sites using a random selection process proportional to the level of fishing activity.

For each predetermined public fishing access site (jetty, beach, marina, pier, boat ramp, causeway, etc.) a random computer selection assigns the date and time during which the APAIS interviewer must stay—whether or not there is fishing activity—to survey all anglers, including those with “no catch,” even in bad weather. The interviewer’s job is to politely engage with anglers, asking questions that will provide data on the health of our recreational fisheries.

These questions include, among others: how long was the angler actively fishing? What was the target fish? What species were actually being caught and how many? Do you have fish that we could sample

(measure, weigh and identify)? The interviews provide valuable information that will allow estimates of overall catch. The more data collected, the more successful the survey becomes.

No Fish Today

It is noteworthy that reporting a zero catch for the day is equally important to the survey results as when you’ve reached the possession limit. A “no catch” response is also calculated into the estimate of catch-per-unit-effort amongst all the anglers fishing in that area, providing realistic data.

Please know that the interviewers have no enforcement responsibility and are not looking for violations or to hassle anglers in any way. Interviewers—whose shirts will be emblazoned

catch, effort and participation is needed to assess trends, to evaluate the impacts of management regulations and to project what effects various management scenarios could have on a fishery.

Recreational fisheries data are crucial for the National Marine Fisheries Service, the regional fishery management councils, the interstate fisheries commissions, state conservation agencies, recreational fishing industries and others involved in the management and productivity of marine fisheries.

The Marine Recreational Information Program consists of several independent, yet complementary surveys:

- **Access Point Angler Intercept Survey**—designed to assess catch per unit effort in all fishing modes, featured in this article;
- **Coastal Household Telephone Survey**—collects information about recreational fishing effort via telephone based data collection. The effort data is used to estimate the total number of fishing trips taken by marine recreational anglers. Effort data collection is transitioning to new U.S. Postal Service-based methods over the years 2015–2018;
- **For-Hire Survey**—designed to assess for-hire charter and headboat fishing effort;
- **Large Pelagic Survey**—which collects information on pelagic species of fish; and
- **Highly Migratory Species Catch Card Census Program**—collects information about migratory fish species.

Each state’s saltwater recreational registry acts as the contact list for the Coastal Household Telephone Survey and the future mail survey. Complete participation in the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program is essential to achieve accurate recreational fishing estimates, helping to ensure healthy fisheries for the future.

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Marine Fisheries Administration conducts a plethora of other surveys to add to these data. (See *The Fishing Experience: It’s Not Just About Fish*, page 24.) Scientists, stakeholders, public officials and many others all have a hand in developing recreational fishing regulations that benefit the marine resource and those who enjoy them. If you’re an angler, the process ultimately revolves around you.

What we learn from anglers is critical to understanding the health of our fisheries. If you are not “intercepted” for an interview or contacted through the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program, you can still participate. Become part of the fishery management process: submit a fishing report after each saltwater trip to the New Jersey Volunteer Angler Survey. Your fishing reports—whether you caught zero or 50 fish—will help improve saltwater fishing opportunities in this state. Your reports will have a real impact on how our oceans are managed. Submit online reports at www.NJFishandWildlife.com/marinesurvey.htm.

Additional Resources:

New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program—and to register: www.saltwaterregistry.nj.gov

Marine Recreational Information Program—www.countmyfish.NOAA.gov

Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (featured in article)—www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/Surveys/survey-details

New Jersey Volunteer Angler Survey—To submit your fishing effort: www.NJFishandWildlife.com/marinesurvey.htm.

NOAA’s Site Register—To learn about New Jersey’s fishing access sites, peruse at www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/siterregister 