

An Agency's Commitment to Recreational Fisheries

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New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife's Marine Fisheries works tirelessly toward managing, maintaining and constantly striving to strengthen our state's recreational saltwater fishery. We rely heavily on our stakeholders and constituents, making this a massive group effort.

While the output of our hard work—and the subsequent decisions—may not, at first, appear to be in the anglers' immediate favor, tough calls are made to ensure healthy future stocks. Marine Fisheries staff are an integral part of our cherished recreational community. Most of the staff work in this field due to their love of the outdoors and

fishing, as well as sharing a common goal to protect the resources of our beautiful state.

NJDEP Fish and Wildlife's Marine Fisheries, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, conducts surveys of marine recreational anglers along with for-hire owners and operators to obtain information about their fishing catch and effort (number of angler trips taken) in marine recreational fishing. Included in these surveys is information about the demographic, social and economic characteristics of those who participate in saltwater recreational fishing in United States waters.

NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is the state-regional-federal partnership that develops, implements and continually improves a national network of recreational fishing surveys to estimate total recreational catch. The data collected help scientists and managers assess and maintain sustainable fish stocks. Quantities taken, fishing effort plus seasonal and geographical distribution of catch and effort are required for the development of rational management policies and plans. Continuous monitoring is needed to better observe recreational fishing trends, to evaluate the impacts of management regulations and to project what impacts various management scenarios will have on a fishery.

Recreational fisheries data are essential for NJDEP Fish and Wildlife, NOAA Fisheries, Regional Fishery Management Councils, Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, other state conservation agencies, recreational fishing industries and others involved in the management and productivity of marine fisheries.

In addition to a number of MRIP surveys, Marine Fisheries conducts a variety of other surveys and programs that help fulfill our dedication to the recreational fisheries community.

**Marine Fisheries' Maryellen Gordon
and Jen Pyle tagging striped bass
in the Delaware Bay.**



Access Point Angler Intercept Survey

The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (AP AIS) is an in-person recreational fishing survey that collects individual catch data, including species identification, total number of each species, individual fish length and weight, as well as angler-specific information about the trip and anglers' fishing behavior. The data are collected by trained field technicians who sample New Jersey's public fishing access sites (i.e., boat ramps, piers, beaches, jetties, bridges, marinas, etc.) interviewing recreational saltwater anglers at the end of their fishing trips.

Field technicians are assigned to visit public fishing access sites during specific times of day. Standard statistical methods are used to select sites that will produce a representative sample of fishing trips using site-specific information found within the Public Fishing Access Site Register. There is also a headboat component of the survey. Field technicians ride along on assigned vessels, interview all anglers on board and take a sub-sample of those anglers to document and measure every single fish they catch and release.

The survey data are used to generate estimates that are used in stock assessments for recreational species and ultimately lead to regulation updates such as smaller or larger bag limits or changes to the open/closed seasons to ensure healthy sustainable stocks. These field intercept surveys are conducted by each of the 13 Atlantic states extending from Maine to Georgia, as well as the Gulf states and Hawaii.



Interviewing anglers for the AP AIS are Marine Fisheries' Lauren Baier and Jarrett Kennedy.

Fish and Wildlife has committed to increasing total AP AIS sampling by over 40% to strengthen the estimates used in recreational fisheries management.

Month	Headboat Assignments	Site Assignments				
		2020	2021 Add-Ons	2022 Add-Ons	% Increase	Current Total
March	5	36	0	0	0	36
April	5	80	18	33	41%	113
May	11	122	28	56	46%	178
June	12	122	28	56	46%	178
July	13	125	28	56	45%	181
August	13	146	28	56	38%	202
September	12	111	28	56	50%	167
October	11	108	28	56	52%	164
November	7	104	28	56	54%	160
December	5	98	18	32	33%	130

For-Hire Telephone Survey

The For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS), or For-Hire Survey, is a telephone survey that collects trip information from for-hire operators to estimate fishing effort.

Every week from March through December, a call list is generated from the known fleet of charter and headboats that are presumed to be operating during that time period in New Jersey. Calls are made to the vessel representatives for each vessel drawn. Information collected includes number of fishing trips within a specific week, number of anglers fishing and the target species for the trip.

The Large Pelagic Telephone Survey (LPTS) is added on to the FHTS between the months of June and October. For-hire operators and anglers with charter/headboat category Highly Migratory Species permits are required to participate in the survey. Questions are specific to trips that targeted any large pelagic species, including but not limited to tuna, shark, billfish, dolphin and wahoo.

These data are paired with data collected through the AP AIS charter and headboat intercepts to estimate total for-hire catch, which is used by fisheries scientists and managers.



Anglers enjoying the day aboard one of New Jersey's for-hire fishing vessels.

On average, over 50 for-hire vessels are contacted weekly. The table shows the % of surveys with responses as compared to those with no responses, as well as refusals.

New Jersey	Wave 1 (JAN/FEB)	Wave 2 (MAR/APR)	Wave 3 (MAY/JUN)	Wave 4 (JUL/AUG)	Wave 5 (SEP/OCT)	Wave 6 (NOV/DEC)
# Vessels Contacted Weekly	0	25	62	63	64	42
% Positive Surveys		69.33%	62.70%	58.02%	55.38%	41.01%
% Non-response		30.27%	36.70%	40.78%	43.42%	58.19%
% Refusal		0.40%	0.60%	1.20%	1.20%	0.80%



Sinking the Joan LaRie III on the Axel Carlson Reef.

Striped Bass Bonus Program

Marine Fisheries initiated the Striped Bass Bonus Program (SBBP) in 1990 to allow the harvest of an additional striped bass for New Jersey recreational anglers. Since New Jersey does not allow netting or sale of striped bass, this commercial quota was transferred to the recreational fishing sector forming the basis of the SBBP. The main goal of the SBBP is to allow anglers to participate in the management process while enjoying their favorite recreational pastime. It is a popular program that provides valuable data for assessing stock status and fishing trends, making it an integral part of New Jersey's striped bass management.

Artificial Reef Program

Since 1984, Fish and Wildlife's Marine Fisheries has been involved in an intensive Artificial Reef Program consisting of reef construction and biological monitoring. The purpose is to create a network of artificial reefs in the ocean waters along the

New Jersey coast to provide a hard substrate for fish, shellfish and crustaceans, fishing grounds for anglers and underwater structures for scuba divers. Currently, Marine Fisheries maintains 17 reef sites.

Various reefs are monitored through a Ventless Trap Survey that entails randomly placing traps throughout three reef sites off the coast of New Jersey onto different substrates. Biologists tend the traps and record data (such as length, weight, sex, etc.) on the different species that are captured before the animals are returned to the water. Once emptied, the traps are put back in the same location where they were pulled so data collection and sites remain consistent. The benefited species (like black sea bass, tautog, summer flounder, lobster and various crabs) are endemic to New Jersey but are limited in extent and abundance by the lack of hard substrate.

Through this survey, we can determine how species utilize different material types and how they use the reefs during different seasons. Using the data collected, scientists can perform different analyses to determine the success and productivity of current reef sites, as well as planning for future reef projects to enhance recreational enjoyment.

Recreational Fishing Data:
www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov

AP AIS:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/access-point-angler-intercept-survey-glance>

MRIP Surveys Overviews:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/types-recreational-fishing-surveys>

Site Register Access:
<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/msd/html/siteRegister.jsp>

About the Site Register:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/public-fishing-access-site-register>

NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program:
<https://www.nj.gov/dep/saltwaterregistry/>

Recreational Saltwater Volunteer Angler Survey:
https://www.njfishandwildlife.org/marinesurvey_intro.htm

Striped Bass Bonus Program:
<https://www.njfishandwildlife.org/bonusbas.htm>

Artificial Reef Program:
<https://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/artreef.htm>

Record Fish Program:
<https://www.njfishandwildlife.org/recfish.htm>

New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program


The New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) is an important tool that helps anglers and policy makers work together to better account for the contributions and impacts of saltwater anglers on ocean ecosystems and coastal economies. In 2006, NOAA Fisheries was charged with creating a universal registry of all current saltwater anglers fishing in the United States. States were allowed to establish their own registry program for saltwater anglers that fished in their state.

New Jersey established a free registry program that became effective May 4, 2011 through Administrative Order No. 2011-05. The NJSRRP is only one part of the national overhaul of the way NOAA Fisheries collects and reports recreational fishing data. The goal of the Marine Recreational Information Program is to provide the most accurate information possible that can be used to determine the health of fish stocks.

Reliable, universally trusted data will, in turn, aid anglers, fisheries managers and other stakeholders in their combined effort to effectively and fairly set the rules that will ensure the long-term sustainability of recreational fishing.

Volunteer Angler Survey

The Recreational Saltwater Volunteer Angler Survey (VAS) was implemented by Marine Fisheries to collect information on recreationally important marine finfish species. Information collected through this voluntary survey will provide data that may support alternative management strategies that increase fishing opportunities for the public.

The focus of this voluntary survey is to collect information on catch and effort from recreational fishing trips in marine and estuarine waters of the state and surrounding areas. For catch information, Marine Fisheries staff are interested in collecting information on the number and size of both kept and released species and should not be used only for successful trips. *Trips with zero catch are important to report, also.* Documenting zero catch trips in recreational fishing data help to accurately estimate fishing effort and to make sure reported trips are representative of all trips taken. 



Tom Corbett landing a keeper striped bass.