

Marine Recreational Information Program

- Since 1979, recreational fishing assessments have been undertaken through the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS).
 - MRFSS = combination of:
 - **Random telephone surveys** to obtain estimates of **effort** (i.e., how many people fish, and how often they fish); and
 - **Shore-based intercepts** to obtain **catch** estimates
 - Data from the two independent surveys are combined to estimate total fishing effort, participation, and catch by species
 - Separate for-hire surveys yield more precise statistics on catch and effort for the charter and party boat sector. These surveys utilize a vessel directory telephone survey, shore-based intercepts, and at-sea sampling which provides direct observations and measurements of both retained and released catches.
 - Some states – e.g., the three West Coast states, Alaska, and Texas – have replaced MRFSS with their own state-based surveys.
- In 2004, NMFS contracted with the National Research Council (NRC) of the national Academy of Sciences to review the current marine recreational fishery survey methods used by NMFS and its partners to monitor and assess recreational fishing effort and catch. The NRC was asked, in part, to assess the adequacy of the current survey methods for providing the quality of information needed to support accurate stock assessments and responsible fisheries management decisions, and to make recommendations for improved methodologies that would ensure more accurate and precise estimates of recreational catch and effort.
- NRC published a report in 2006. The report identified a number of problems with the sampling and estimation designs employed in the current surveys, questioned **the adequacy of the existing surveys in providing the statistics needed to support accurate stock assessments and appropriate fishery management decisions**, and called upon NMFS to reform the survey program.
- Congress responded to the NRC Report by amending the Magnuson Act. The amendments require NMFS to **establish a program to improve the quality and accuracy of current estimates of marine recreational fishing catch and effort**, consistent with the recommendations of the NRC Report. As part of the new program, Congress called upon NMFS to

establish a universal registry of all saltwater anglers to provide a more accurate sample pool for use in assessing catch and effort data.

- NMFS responded to the NRC Report and the Magnuson Act amendments by establishing the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). The purpose of MRIP is to design and implement an improved system of regional surveys that will replace the existing marine recreational fishing data collection programs (aka the MRFSS).
 - MRFSS was originally developed to estimate annual recreational fishing effort on a broad regional scale.
 - But demands for recreational fishing statistics have changed. Fisheries management programs and stock assessments now require more timely and accurate estimates at finer geographic and temporal scales.
 - The new MRIP will continue to be national in scope, but it will also lend itself better to being tailored to meet specific regional, state, and local informational needs.
 - Phase I of the MRIP is the registry program
 - Phase II involves improved shore-based surveys and other enhancements to the assessment program
 - As is/was the case with MRFSS, the Phase II portion of the MRIP will continue to be funded generally by NMFS and conducted in cooperation with, and *with supplemental funding from*, interstate commissions and state agencies.
- If RI provides no additional investment in the survey and sampling component of the MRIP, RI will hobble along doing the bare minimum with its baseline federal funding – i.e., about 1,100 intercepts/year.
- But the likelihood is that such minimal assessment work will continue to result in less-than-reliable assessments (despite the improvements made to design and methodology). The strength and accuracy of the assessments relates both to quality *and quantity*.
- It is in the recreational fishing community's best interest to couple the improved registry initiative with improved survey, sampling, and analytical work. Such improvements will enhance the precision of catch and effort estimates; and such enhancements will provide a stronger and more effective platform for fisheries management decisions, allocations, and stock assessments.
- Case in point: the recreational summer flounder fishery. For 2009, RI has had to tailor its regulatory program to account for an apparent overage of

some 54% in the 2008 recreational fishery. That overage was deduced by drawing from the regional MRFSS database the amount of catch and effort in the summer flounder fishery in 2008 attributable to RI fishermen. It is a difficult and imprecise exercise to extract such RI-specific information from a database with minimal RI-specific data points. Expanding RI-based data points in the new MRIP database holds the promise of significantly improving the accuracy of future RI-based assessments, which in turn will help to rationalize future regulations governing the recreational summer flounder fishery.

Saltwater Rec License Status of Other New England States

5/1/09

New Jersey

Contact: David Chanda, Director, Division of Fish & Wildlife 609-292-9410

- Bill backed by Recreational Fishing Alliance, establishing a “free” registry, is pending in the NJ Legislature
- State opposed; maintains that administrative cost of “free” program is in the range of \$1-\$2 million; given that fiscal impact (unfunded mandate), State doubts that the bill will move
- State is reaching out to recreational fishing clubs and organizations throughout the State, talking about the budget woes that are hampering the marine fisheries program (down to 37 employees), trying to garner support for a registry program that will pay for itself and provide additional programmatic support.

New York

Contact: Jim Gilmore (631-444-0430)

- New license law adopted 3/09
- Key provisions:
 - \$10 residents; \$15 non-residents
 - 7-day license: \$8 residents; \$10 non-residents
 - 1-day license: \$4 residents; \$5 non-residents
 - No license required for anyone under 16
 - No license required for anyone fishing on a licensed party or charter boat
 - No license fee for: Native Americans living on reservations; active military personnel; individuals who are blind
 - License fee for party & charter boat = \$250 (original license fee, already on the books) + \$400 (new recreational marine fishing license fee) = \$650 total.
 - All license fee revenues go to marine conservation & regulation
 - Expected revenue = \$2.5 million/year
 - Costs of program administration = not yet determined
 - License issuing officers may retain 5.5% of the gross proceeds from the sale of licenses.
 - Reciprocity:
 - CT – for those parts of Long Island Sound between NY and CT
 - NJ – for those parts of NY Harbor, Hudson River, Kill Van Kull, Arthur Kill, Raritan Bay, and the ocean waters between NY and NJ
 - RI – for those parts of Long Island Sound, Block Island Sound, and the ocean waters between NY and RI

Connecticut

Contact: David Simpson, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries 860-447-4306

- Bill to establish new license is pending in the CT General Assembly (H.B. 6428)
- Key provisions:
 - To become effective January 1, 2010
 - \$20 residents; \$30 non-residents
 - 1-day resident: \$10
 - 3-day non-resident: \$20
 - No license required for anyone under 16
 - No license required if fishing on/from property on which one resides (via ownership or lease)
 - No license required if fishing in a sanctioned one-day fishing derby
 - No license required if fishing during annual statewide free-fishing day
 - No license required for anyone fishing on a licensed party or charter boat
 - No license fee for residents 65 and over
 - Reciprocity for NY, RI, MA, NH, & ME residents, if those states provide reciprocity for CT residents
- Existing party & charter boat license fee: \$250
- State estimates that 102,000 residents and 5,000 non-residents will obtain licenses

Massachusetts

Contact: Melanie Griffin, Environ. Analyst, Division of Marine Fisheries 617-626-1528

- Recreational Registry Steering Cmte. is continuing to meet and consider options and proposals
- Nothing yet has been introduced in the Legislature
- The Cmte. is leaning toward:
 - A \$10 license, with no differential for residents vs. non-residents.
 - A \$125 charter boat license, and a \$175 party boat license
 - Exemptions = federal exemption requirements
 - No license fee for those 65 and older
- The fee revenues would be used for programs that benefit recreational fishermen, with 30% going specifically to public access projects.
- Reciprocity for non-residents licensed by NH or RI, including shore-based as well as vessel-based fishermen.

New Hampshire

Contact:

- Bill establishing saltwater fishing license (HB 0481) passed by House on 4/9; currently under consideration in the Senate
- Key provisions:
 - \$15 fee for both residents and non-residents
 - \$75 fee for charter boats
 - \$150 fee for party boats
 - No license required for anyone under 16
 - No license required for anyone fishing on a licensed party or charter boat
 - No fee for residents 65 and over who receive public aid
 - Reciprocity for ME and MA, provided that ME and MA provide reciprocity to NH fishermen

- The bill's fiscal notes estimates that the new license will generate \$781,030 in revenue; increased expenditures (administrative costs) are estimated to be \$58,798
- In order to estimate the number of saltwater anglers that would actually purchase individual licenses in the state, the NH compared MRFSS survey results from the state of North Carolina to the number of saltwater licenses sold by the state of North Carolina and applied the same ratio to MRFSS survey information for the state of New Hampshire. The Department's estimate also accounts for license reciprocity with Maine and Massachusetts under the assumption that neighboring states will also have saltwater license programs.
- In NC: MRFSS estimated 1.9 million anglers; 735,000 obtained licenses; therefore ratio = 38%
- In NH: MRFSS estimated 172,000 anglers; 38% = 65,000 x \$15 = 980,00 – reciprocity factor = party/charter boat license = \$781K

Maine

Contact: David Etnier, Deputy Commission, Dept. of Marine Resources (207) 624-6553

- 2 bills being considered by ME legislature:
 - "Free" registry approach, backed by Sen. David Trahan (SP 516, LD 1432)
 - Exemptions:
 - Under 16
 - Passenger fishing with a licensed guide
 - Customer on licensed for-hire vessel
 - Active military while on leave or furlough
 - Person with a disability
 - Disabled veteran
 - Anyone licensed or registered to fish in any jurisdiction that has a program meeting the Magnuson Act requirements
 - Until 9/30/11: Anyone who violates must be issued an informational brochure developed by the Commissioner to educate and inform the person on the registry requirements.
 - Beginning 10/1/11: Anyone who violates will be guilty of a civil violation and be subject to a fine of not less that \$100.
 - Bill appropriates \$12K to the Dept. of Marine Resources to create and administer the registry
 - Traditional licensing approach, backed by ME Dept. of Marine Resources (HP935, LD 1331)
 - \$15 (residents)
 - \$30 (non-residents)
 - Non-res age 70 or older: \$15
 - Non-res 14-day: \$15
 - No license required if under 16, or if a resident 70 or over
 - No license required if a passenger fishing with a licensed guide or if fishing aboard a for-hire vessel
 - Limited reciprocity (just NH)
 - Violations: civil, subject to a fine of not less than \$100

- All license fee revenues to go into newly established “Marine Recreational Fishing Conservation and Management Fund,” established within the Dept. of Marine Fisheries.
 - All monies received into the Fund must be used for the purposes of the fund, namely:
 - Resource and habitat enhancement
 - Fisheries management research
 - Land acquisition for fishery habitat enhancement or public access to coastal waters
 - Enforcement of marine resources laws
 - Education, promotion, and outreach
 - Administration and operating expenses
 - The DMF Commissioner may authorize the expenditure of monies from the Fund for any of the above-noted purposes, subject to advice from the Marine Recreational Fisheries and Habitat Advisory Council
 - Commission must report annually to the Legislature on the amount of money collected in the fund and expenditures made from the Fund during the previous fiscal year
- Both bills scheduled for work session on May 11th

Option A: "Bare Bones" Registry

Nature of Program

- As set forth in April 2009 draft proposal.
- Same fee for residents and non-residents

Costs

1. Cost of developing and implementing web-based registration portal (*R/Interactive*)
 - Website
 - Vendor set-up and training (25 vendors?)
 - Customer service
 - Data reporting
 - Credit card processing fees

Combined cost estimate = \$96,580

2. Cost of providing education and outreach, and enforcement, relating to the registration program (*RIDEM*)
 - Education & outreach: 0.5 FTE, materials and supplies = \$100,000
 - Enforcement: 3.0 FTEs, 3 vehicles = \$336,000

Combined cost estimate = \$436,000

3. Total program cost estimate = \$532,580

Estimated Revenue from Registry Program

- In order to estimate the number of saltwater anglers that would actually purchase individual licenses in the state, the NH compared MRFSS survey results from the state of North Carolina to the number of saltwater licenses sold by the state of North Carolina and applied the same ratio to MRFSS survey information for the state of New Hampshire. The Department's estimate also accounts for license reciprocity with Maine and Massachusetts under the assumption that neighboring states will also have saltwater license programs.
- In NC: MRFSS estimated 1.9 million anglers; 735,000 obtained licenses; therefore ratio = 38%
- In NH: MRFSS estimated 172,000 anglers; 38% = 65,000 x \$15 = 980,00
– reciprocity factor = party/charter boat license = \$781K

- Total estimated number of anglers in RI: 300,000
- 300,000 x 38% = 114,000
- Subtract exemptions and free licenses
 - Under 16
 - Disabled
 - On leave from military
 - Passengers on for-hire vessels
 - Those who only fish during annual free-fishing day
 - Over 65 (est.: 3% of total)
- Total estimated number of anglers in RI who will purchase registrations: 100,000

Estimated amount of fee per fisher needed to cover total program costs for Option "A" =

$$532,580/100,000 = \mathbf{\$5.33}$$

Option B: Expanded Registry

Nature of Program

- As set forth in April 2009 draft proposal, with slightly broader objectives.
- Same fee for residents and non-residents

Costs

1. Cost of developing and implementing web-based registration portal (*R/Interactive*)

Combined cost estimate = \$96,580

2. Cost of providing education and outreach, and enforcement, relating to the registration program (*RIDEM*)

Combined cost estimate = \$436,000

3. Cost of improving the MRFSS Survey (*RIDEM + contractual*)

- Objectives: 1) to achieve levels of precision at or near 10% PSE (proportional standard error); and 2) to have the staff resources necessary to run models, add data components, establish volunteer surveys, etc.
- Means: an additional 1,372 intercepts and 2,410 telephone surveys above the NMFS allocation
- Proposal: 1.0 FTE (\$112K), \$186K in contractual services, \$19K in operating expenses, and \$20K in indirect charges
- Total cost = \$337K, of which \$253K can be derived from federal sources

Combined cost estimate = \$84,223

4. Total program cost estimate = \$616,803

Estimated amount of fee per fisher needed to cover total program costs for Option "B" =

$616,803/100,000 = \mathbf{\$6.17}$

Option C: License

Nature of Program

- As set forth in April 2009 draft proposal, with significantly broader objectives.
- Differential fee for residents and non-residents

Costs

1. Cost of developing and implementing web-based registration portal (*RI Interactive*)

Combined cost estimate = \$96,580

2. Cost of providing education and outreach, and enforcement, relating to the registration program (*RIDEM*)

Combined cost estimate = \$436,000

3. Cost of improving the MRFSS Survey (*RIDEM + contractual*)

Combined cost estimate = \$84,223

4. Revenues applied to expenditures for infrastructure (piers, ramps, etc.) and/or other issues of importance to RI's recreational fishing community:

= \$250,000

5. Total program cost/expenditure estimate = **\$866,803**

Estimated amount of fee per fisher needed to cover total program costs & expenditures for Option "C" =

RI Residents = $\$6.17 + 0.83 = \mathbf{\$7.00} \times 42,000 = \$294,000$

Non-residents = $\$6.17 + 3.83 = \mathbf{\$10.00} \times 58,000 = \$580,000$

$\$294,000 + \$580,000 = \$874,000$