



What Rhode Island Anglers Need to Know About the

New State Saltwater Fishing License & Federal Registry Requirements



Effective January 2010:

- ❖ In order to fish recreationally in Rhode Island's marine waters, and in offshore federal waters, saltwater recreational anglers and spearfishers will need:
 - A federal registration, or
 - A RI state license, or
 - A state license from a reciprocal state
- ❖ Exemptions: No registration or license is required for children under 16; anglers fishing on licensed party or charter boats; anglers who hold a Highly Migratory Species Angling permit; anglers who are on leave from active military duty; or anglers who are blind or permanently disabled.

Federal Registration

- Available online. Go to www.countmyfish.noaa.gov
- Annual fee of \$15
- Applies in RI waters and in all offshore federal waters
- Does not apply in MA, CT or NY waters
- Generally not applicable in the waters of other states; check state laws

RI License

- Available online beginning April 15, 2010
- Go to www.saltwater.ri.gov
- Fees:
 - \$7 RI residents (annual)
 - \$10 Non-residents (annual)
 - \$5 7-day
- Available from certain bait & tackle shops beginning June 1, 2010 (details to follow)
- Free for RI residents over 65; and for active military personnel stationed in RI
- Applies in RI waters and in all offshore federal waters
- Applies in MA, CT, and NY waters; and in the waters of all other states that honor RI licenses

Reciprocal State Licenses

- RI will honor all holders of reciprocal state licenses – including CT, NY, and MA. There is no need for such license holders to also obtain a RI license
- Listing of all reciprocal state licenses will be available via website
- Reciprocal state licenses apply in RI waters and in all offshore federal waters

Background & Purpose

- ❖ There is a need to improve the quality of marine recreational fishing data to ensure that the management actions put in place to preserve and protect marine recreational fisheries are fair, effective, and based on sound science.
- ❖ The current assessment program, known as MRFSS, has been in place since 1979. It has serious shortcomings, largely because there is no universal database of recreational fishermen to draw upon for survey purposes.
- ❖ In 2006, the U.S. Congress addressed the problem by amending federal law (the Magnuson-Stevens Act) to require the National Marine Fisheries Service to establish a universal registry of all saltwater anglers and to revamp the MRFSS program.
- ❖ NMFS responded by establishing the new National Saltwater Angler Registry and replacing MRFSS with a new Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).
- ❖ The Registry program gives states the option of developing their own state license programs as a substitute for the federal registry. The federal registry costs \$15 annually. Also, the registry does not afford reciprocity with other states.
- ❖ In 2009, the RI General Assembly enacted a new state law establishing a new RI saltwater license. The law took effect in January 2010. The new state license program gives RI anglers the option of obtaining a relatively inexpensive RI state license, in lieu of a federal registration. The RI license can also be used in all waters throughout southern New England, whereas the federal registration does not cover fishing activities in neighboring state waters.
- ❖ All RI license information, as well as that collected by NMFS and other states, will be incorporated into a national “phone book” of recreational anglers, enabling the new MRIP program to readily survey current fishermen and more accurately assess recreational catch and effort data. That information will lead to improved state-based assessments and more fair, accurate, and effective management programs for Rhode Island’s marine recreational fisheries.
- ❖ An additional purpose, and benefit, of the new federal/state registry/license program is that it will provide the first full accounting of the scope of recreational saltwater fishing in the U.S., and will thereby help to more fully demonstrate anglers’ economic, conservation, and marine stewardship contributions.

License Fee Revenues

- ❖ Whereas the fees collected by NMFS for the federal registry (beginning in 2011) will all go into the U.S. Treasury, all of the RI license fees will stay in RI and be deposited into a restricted receipt account, managed by DEM. The state law governing the program mandates that the license fee revenues can only be used to administer and enforce the license program, manage the State’s recreational fisheries, and enhance recreational fishing opportunities. The RI license fee revenues cannot be used for any purpose that is unrelated to marine recreational fishing in RI.