

**RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES



**Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational
Fishing License Program**

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2018

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I. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to meet the requirements of RIGL § 20-2.2-10 by providing an annual overview of the Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater License Program (program), including the total amount of licenses issued and fee revenue received, expenditures made during the prior year from the license fee account, and a programmatic budget for the following fiscal year. Also included is information relating to the administration and enforcement of the program, and the status of state-based recreational fishing assessments. In accordance with the provisions of the statute, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) submits the report to the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council (Council) and conducts a public meeting to solicit input from recreational fishermen and the general public. The Council is then tasked with providing its opinion as to whether the program is meeting its intended purpose, and to offer any recommendations for modifying the program. The report and addendum are then submitted to the Rhode Island General Assembly.

II. RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Program

Background

The State of Rhode Island enacted legislation in January 2010 establishing the Recreational Saltwater License Program for Rhode Island. This legislation was shaped and supported by a Recreational Marine License Study Group, which was co-chaired by DEM and the R.I. Saltwater Anglers' Association (RISAA) and included representatives from a variety of recreational fishing groups and interests from Rhode Island. The Department's Division of Marine Fisheries (Division) then developed regulations, which were adopted in April 2010. The program has two primary purposes:

- Provide a state-based alternative to federal saltwater angler registry requirements, which are administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) pursuant to the 2006 Amendments to the federal Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act (section 401(g)) (hereinafter referred to as the "Magnuson Act Amendments").
- Provide a source of state funding for programs and activities that benefit marine recreational fishing interests in Rhode Island.

The Magnuson Act Amendments mandate the establishment of a national registry program for all saltwater anglers for use in conducting more accurate marine recreational fisheries statistical surveys. These surveys serve as the backbone of marine fisheries management programs for the recreational fishing sector. In December 2008, NMFS promulgated the final rule creating the registry, and also established an option for states to develop their own state-based licensing programs as an alternative, provided that the state programs meet federal criteria. The new federal registry requirements also pertain to for-hire vessels, requiring that they either register federally or be subject to state-based licensing. Pursuant to a R.I. Gen. Laws § 20-2-27.1, RI requires for-hire vessels (charter

and party boats carrying recreational fishermen) to obtain a RI party and charter boat license.

In the summer of 2010, the Division submitted the new RI recreational saltwater fishing license program, and the existing RI party and charter boat license program, to NMFS for review. On October 25, 2010, NMFS and the Division entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), pursuant to which the Division agreed to regularly collect and transmit to NMFS the contact information generated by the two programs.

In 2010, a federal registration was available at no cost. Beginning in 2011 however, NMFS enacted a \$15 annual fee for the federal registration. The annual cost has since increased to \$29.

On the basis of the NMFS review and approval of the RI license programs, and the commitments set forth in the MOU, the State of Rhode Island was officially designated as an exempted state for all anglers, spear fishers, and for-hire fishing vessels on November 8, 2010, enabling the RI recreational saltwater fishing license program and the RI party and charter boat license program to serve as a valid, legal substitutes for the federal registry.

As established by the statute, anyone wishing to recreationally fish or spearfish in the marine waters of RI must possess either a RI state fishing license, a state fishing license from a reciprocal state, or a federal registration. The requirement solely pertains to those harvesting, or attempting to harvest, finfish for non-commercial purposes. In 2012, the RI regulations were amended to include squid as well. Exemptions are provided for the following categories:

- Children under 16,
- Anglers fishing on licensed party or charter boats,
- RI residents who are blind or permanently disabled, and
- RI residents who are on leave from active military duty.
- RI residents over the age of 65, and active military personnel stationed in RI, are eligible to obtain RI state licenses at no cost.

The RI license fees -- \$7/year for residents (under age 65), \$10/year for non-residents, and \$5 for a 7-day license – are designed to both cover the administrative costs of the license program and provide additional support to programs and activities that serve the needs and interests of saltwater recreational fishermen in Rhode Island.

Status

Because the federal registration did not have a fee during 2010, it was difficult to assess the metrics of the RI program during its inaugural year. Since 2011, the program has equilibrated, providing more predictable participation and revenue rates. The average number of licenses issued between 2011 - 2015 was approximately 42,000 per year, generating average revenues of about \$270,000 gross and \$180,000 net. For the last two years (2016 and 2017) this figure has risen to approximately 47,000 licenses issued per

year generating average revenues of about \$300,000 gross and \$200,000 net. All net license fee revenues, those not retained by the program vendor, are deposited into a restricted receipt account.

Benefits

The overarching benefits of recreational license programs are their potential for improving recreational fishing management by:

- Allowing flexibility in the administration of the recreational license program to suit the needs of Rhode Island.
- Improving the quality and accuracy of marine recreational fishing data; and
- Providing an improved means for quantifying the scope of recreational saltwater fishing and spearfishing in Rhode Island, and throughout the U.S.

A key benefit of having the State of Rhode Island administer its own license program is the opportunity to make the license available at a lower cost than a federal registration. The \$7 (resident) and \$10 (non-resident) fees for the RI license compare favorably to the \$29 fee for the federal registration. Moreover, RI does not require state residents over the age of 65, or any active military personnel stationed in RI, to pay a fee for a license. RI offers a 7-day license at a reduced rate of \$5, available to both residents and nonresidents.

An additional benefit of having RI administer its own program is that the State program offers certain exemptions that are not available under the federal program – namely, exemptions for RI residents who are blind or permanently disabled, and RI residents who are on leave from active military duty.

Another benefit of having a RI state program is reciprocity with neighboring states and federal waters. Pursuant to Rhode Island’s licensing statute, Rhode Island will extend reciprocity to any other state that offers reciprocity to Rhode Island. Any resident from a reciprocal state who is licensed by that state can fish in RI waters without having to obtain a RI license, provided that a RI resident with a RI license can fish in the waters of the reciprocal state without having to obtain a license from that state. The states currently covered by a reciprocity agreement with Rhode Island are: New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine.

A portion of each Rhode Island license sold, \$2 for every license sold online, and \$3 for every license sold via a vendor, is used to cover the costs of administering the licensing program. An additional charge of \$2 per license is assessed if a non-resident buys a license at a brick and mortar vendor. This money goes directly to the vendors who administer the program and are not revenues received by the state. In this way, the program covers its own costs and is self-sustaining.

The balance of the revenues derived from license sales are deposited into a restricted receipt account, which is managed by the Department and subject to the exclusive-use restrictions set forth by statute. Monies from the account may only be used for: managing Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries, with particular reference to

improving State-based recreational fishery catch and effort statistics and stock assessments; and enhancing recreational fishing opportunities in the State. The availability of this dedicated revenue source for use in supporting programs and activities that address the priority interests of RI's recreational fishing community is a major benefit associated with the RI license program. Of particular value is the opportunity to use the state funds to leverage federal funds.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Sport Fish Restoration Program provides federal funding for saltwater recreational fishing programs. The funding is administered via grants to the State; projects written into these grants require a 25% state match. The fees generated by the RI saltwater license program are used to leverage an additional \$3 for every \$1 dedicated to projects and activities that enhance recreational saltwater fishing access, as well as science and management programs that relate directly to recreational fish stocks. It is the policy of the Division to only fund Saltwater Fishing License Fee projects which have been matched with USFWS grants unless absolutely necessary.

Implementation

Internet Based System & Local Vendors: RIGL § 20-2.2-7 authorizes and directs DEM to engage the contractual services of a state-approved vendor to develop and implement a web-based system that serves as a portal to obtain licenses. The system developed by the vendor is used directly by recreational fishermen and by authorized licensing agents.

During the initial program development stage, DEM entered into a formal agreement with Rhode Island Interactive (RII), a company which administers the Rhode Island state government web portal, known as RI.gov. Pursuant to the agreement, RII is responsible for developing and implementing the internet-based licensing system. RII followed through by developing and implementing a system that serves as the mechanism for issuing licenses, and for collecting all required contact information at the point of sale for the national registry.

The internet-based system offers all anglers and spear fishers the opportunity to easily obtain their license or license renewal online at their convenience. The system is also used by authorized vendors to provide a point-of-sale alternative for anglers and spear fishers to acquire a license. These vendors include bait and tackle shops, marinas and big box stores. To date, there are over 30 authorized vendors. RII is responsible for handling the business arrangements with each vendor, including billing, remittance and technical support. Vendors must pay an annual fee of \$75 to RII to cover these service costs.

To cover the overall costs of administering the web-based license program, RII retains \$2 for each license sold via the internet. If a license is sold by a vendor, RII retains \$1 and the vendor retains \$2. Neither RII nor the vendors receive any compensation for no-fee licenses issued to RI residents over the age of 65 or active military personnel stationed in RI.

RII provides all angler contact information (name, address, phone number, date of birth – and if provided, email address) to the Division monthly via electronic transfer. The confidentiality of the data is protected via the use of encryption. The Division, in turn, provides the encrypted data to the NMFS MRIP program for incorporation into the national registry.

Information & Outreach: Since the rollout of the Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License, the Division has continued to provide information and outreach to the Rhode Island angling community. The primary vehicle is the webpage, www.saltwater.ri.gov, which provides direct access to the licensing portal. The page includes a detailed FAQ section, covering all aspects of the license program, a link to all authorized license vendors, links to recreational fishing regulations, the locations of all public boat ramps that provide access to marine waters in Rhode Island, and other information pertinent to recreational saltwater fishing.

Since 2013, the Division has contracted with a publishing company to create a recreational fishing guide for distribution throughout the state. The guide provides information on a variety of recreational-fishing-related issues, including current recreational fishing regulations, information on local fishing and boating access sites, and commonly caught species. It also provides information on the license program. The guide has emerged as a popular, widely circulated annual publication that serves to both promote recreational saltwater fishing in RI and inform the angling community on saltwater license revenue supported programs and regulations.

The Division continues to issue periodic press releases regarding the license program and produce fact sheets, informational cards and brochures for dissemination at public events, such as the RISAA annual New England Saltwater Fishing Show. The Division continues to staff a booth at the show to answer questions about recreational fishing, and to issue licenses on the spot. The show offers an ideal opportunity to interact directly with the recreational fishing community.

The Division also continues to participate in at least one RISAA meeting every year, at which the draft annual report is presented and discussed, and ideas are solicited for improvements to the program. To address recent suggestions offered by RISAA via this forum, the Division will provide more frequent updates to RISAA and other interested parties on projects funded by recreational license funds. For example, the Division will report any boat ramp repairs or construction updates to RISAA to disseminate to their members. Another valuable suggestion generated by the group is to communicate any maintenance/infrastructure via press releases. The group feels that it is important to increase public awareness of how the recreational saltwater license funds are being spent. Tangible results increase the positive perception of the program. To that end the Division will also highlight these projects in its annual magazine. The group also suggested more communication between the Division and the angling public to direct where access point maintenance is needed.

To help increase awareness regarding the license program in the field, the Division also continues to maintain weatherproof vinyl signs at fishing access points throughout RI. The signs feature an illustration of the license and clear text informing the public that the

license is required and how it can be acquired. RI also continues to provide informational signs to vendors to advertise the availability of licenses at their places of business.

For the FY2017 funding cycle, the Division started funding an annual youth fishing camp administered by RISAA with oversight from the Division. The camp was a success, enrolling 51 children for three days of fishing and fishing-oriented activities. Based on the popularity of this exciting initiative, the Division and RISAA plan to continue the camp in FY2018 at Rocky Point. RISAA is a very large and active RI-based recreational fishing organization. An overview of the association can be found on their website: www.risaa.org. The state support used to match the federal USFWS sportfish (RI Aquatic Education) grant for the youth fishing camp was derived almost entirely from credits derived from the donated time spent by the RISAA volunteers. Future camps will continue to leverage volunteer hours to match federal funding. In the event that the match source comes up short, recreational saltwater license revenue will be used to cover the shortfall.

Free Fishing Day: In accordance with the statutory allowance for one free fishing day a year, during which all license requirements are waived, the DEM Director continues to declare a free fishing day each summer. Since 2010, the free fishing day has coincided with Governor's Bay Day.

Licenses Issued, Revenues Received: Fiscal Years 2011-2018

Tables 1-3 summarize licenses issued and revenue generated since the inception of the license program. For the purposes of this report, gross revenue is the total amount of fees paid for the saltwater recreational license. Net revenue is the balance of fees deposited into the restricted account after the administrative costs are to the internet portal contractor and other brick and mortar vendors are subtracted out. License numbers and revenues increased after FY11, as expected, as the federal registry switched from being a free alternative to a costly alternative. In the seven years since FY11, license issued have increased to approximately 50,000 per year, generating an average gross revenue of about \$330,000, and average net revenue of about \$234,000. Despite the increases, the number of licenses sold and revenue generated has fallen well short of initial predictions in 2010, resulting in a much more constrained budget than originally envisioned. FY18 continued the upward trend of FY17 with increased license sales above the recent average. During FY18, 50,795 licenses were issued resulting in \$330,444 in gross revenue and \$233,934 in net revenue. This is a bigger than expected jump in sales from FY17 and likely a result of a stronger economy and the rollout of a new web portal to purchase fishing and hunting licenses.

Table 1. RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses – Number Issued: FY11 through FY18

License Type	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
Resident Full Year	18,658	26,556	25,864	25,938	26,084	29,335	28,605	31,576
Non-Resident Full Year	5,249	7,649	6,975	7,432	7,381	8,428	8,378	8,762
Resident 7-Day	60	122	107	144	134	159	158	167
Non-Resident 7 Day	1,310	2,505	2,730	2,958	3,055	3,141	3,221	3,436
Resident Over 65	3,635	4,613	4,653	4,667	4,704	5,078	5,613	5,879
Active Military Stationed in RI	703	993	996	1,055	992	1,006	971	975
Totals:	29,615	42,438	41,325	42,194	42,350	47,147	46,946	50,795

Table 2. RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses -- Gross Revenue: FY11 through FY18

License Type	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
Resident Full Year	\$130,606	\$185,892	\$181,048	\$181,566	\$182,588	\$205,345	\$200,235	\$221,032
Non-Resident Full Year	\$52,490	\$76,490	\$69,750	\$74,320	\$73,810	\$84,280	\$83,780	\$90,938
Resident 7-Day	\$300	\$610	\$535	\$720	\$670	\$795	\$790	\$835
Non-Resident 7 Day	\$6,550	\$12,525	\$13,650	\$14,790	\$15,275	\$15,705	\$16,105	\$17,639
Resident Over 65	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Active Military Stationed in RI	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Totals:	\$189,946	\$275,517	\$264,983	\$271,396	\$272,343	\$306,125	\$300,910	\$330,444

Table 3. RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses -- Net Revenue: FY11 through FY18

License Type	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
Resident Full Year	\$88,462	\$124,413	\$120,880	\$120,736	\$121,175	\$136,810	\$133,772	\$155,040
Non-Resident Full Year	\$40,702	\$58,566	\$53,340	\$56,970	\$56,682	\$64,923	\$64,664	\$68,952
Resident 7-Day	\$174	\$352	\$304	\$411	\$382	\$453	\$430	\$477
Non-Resident 7 Day	\$3,605	\$6,528	\$6,988	\$7,794	\$8,085	\$8,445	\$8,765	\$9,465
Resident Over 65	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Active Military Stationed in RI	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Totals:	\$132,943	\$189,859	\$181,512	\$185,911	\$186,324	\$210,631	\$207,631	\$233,934

III. Status of State-Based Fishing Assessments

Rhode Island's recreational catch and effort data is collected via the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). MRIP is designed to improve recreational data collection by using the data generated from license sales to create a national recreational angler registry and by employing new angler survey protocols. This registry of licensees is a known sampling frame that can be drawn upon to conduct more focused surveys. Addresses taken from the registry are used to assess fishing effort, i.e., the number of anglers and the number of trips they make in Rhode Island. Catch data is collected by intercept interviews with anglers at fishing access sites. This catch data is used to calculate the number, species, and size of the fish being caught by recreational anglers in Rhode Island. Data from the two independent surveys is combined to produce regional and coast wide estimates of recreational harvest. Results are reported in two-month periods called waves. This data is collected during the months of March through December; no recreational data is collected in Rhode Island during wave 1 (January - February) due to low fishing activity.

The portion of MRIP that collects recreational fishing *effort* data is currently being collected by the Fishing Effort Survey (FES) a mail-based system which has replaced the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS). A benchmarking period during which data collection was conducted with both methodologies and was successful. The data collected during benchmarking period was used to calculate a conversion factor used to relate effort data collected in the past with the CHTS to the new effort data collected by the FES.

The FES methodology uses information provided by anglers when purchasing a Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License as the sample frame for the surveys. The data is provided to MRIP to create a registry of anglers; addresses are randomly drawn from the registry and mail surveys concerning fishing effort are sent to those addresses. The new (FES) system has proven to be a better estimator of fishing activity than the prior (CHTS) system. The improved accuracy of the FES has provided a better understanding of the number of anglers and trips taking place and has shown that more anglers were making fishing trips than previously estimated. The increased effort combined with the existing catch rates has highlighted that previous catch and harvest estimates were much lower than the newly revised estimates. Comparisons of catch and harvest estimates using the two methods are available on the MRIP website. The new report with the detailed FES statistics is slated for release in April 2019.

The second portion of MRIP focuses on the collection of recreational *catch* statistics. The Access Point Angler Interview Survey (APAIS) is the portion of MRIP that captures the recreational catch data. As of 2016, the Division is responsible for conduct of the APAIS. Prior to that, the Division had a contract with the federally approved contractor to perform the APAIS. The accuracy of the data collected via angler intercepts has been improving over the past three years, due to the new approaches employed under MRIP. The number of attempted interviews is increasing, as is the spatial and temporal distribution of the interviews. A more comprehensive sampling frame of potential sampling locations with accompanying site pressures is being used to better distribute the

interviews. Better statistical sample distribution is expected to continue to increase the accuracy of the estimates. Additionally, interviews are now being conducted at night and at increasing rates during the winter months. Intercept refusal rates have remained level, despite the change to the Division conducting the APAIS. The Division is working hard to improve this aspect of the processes and is engaging stakeholders at local club events to foster buy in to the APAIS. This face-to-face approach has been well received and will continue into the future. The Division has also reached out to NOAA Fisheries for outreach materials and strategies which should have positive results.

To further add to the above-described improvements, the Division is increasing the number of sample draws across all months using revenues from Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License, matched 3:1 with USFWS federal grant money. The funds are being used to hire four additional seasonal employees during the summer months to perform these additional interview shifts. The Division plans to continue this practice into the foreseeable future. This state-specific increase in sample numbers has increased the accuracy and precision of recreational catch and effort data for RI.

As mentioned above, APAIS has transitioned from contractor-based administration to state-based administration. The transition occurred in 2016. The data collected from APAIS is displayed in table 4a, 4b, 4c and 5. Recreational Saltwater License funds were not used to make this transition; it was a federally funded initiative. Agreements have been forged between NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) outlining the duties and responsibilities the Division must accomplish to successfully transition and run the program. To accomplish this transition the Division hired a full-time coordinator to administer the program. The funding for this position is provided annually by NOAA Fisheries. The MRIP coordinator will be responsible for maintaining and scheduling personnel who will conduct angler intercepts throughout RI. In addition to staffing duties, the coordinator will be responsible for QA/QC, validation, and disseminating of data collected to the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Survey (ACCSP). ACCSP is part of ASMFC and will be coordinating the collection of data from state partners for delivery to NOAA Fisheries.

The Division has hired a full-time field interviewer to perform angler intercepts during waves 2 -6 throughout Rhode Island. NOAA Fisheries provides funding for one staff as well as for four seasonal employees each year. These employees travel to shore-based sites and ride on board head boats to conduct angler interviews routinely as prescribed by APAIS. The full-time employee also provides back office support to the MRIP coordinator. As mentioned above, Recreational Saltwater License funds will be used each year to increase the number of interviews beyond the base number funded by NOAA Fisheries. These additional interviews are accomplished by hiring additional seasonal employees during peak fishing waves. The funding for the three additional seasonal employees is provided by Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater License fees matched 3:1 with USFWS grant funds. It is estimated that the four additional temporary samplers will accomplish the same number of additional samples (likely more) than were purchased directly from the contractor in the past. After one year of the new methodology it has been determined that two additional seasonal employees is an effective number to conduct the additional site assignments requested by the Division. By ordering additional samples from NOAA Fisheries, the tiered nature of the sample draws can result in

summer weekend days requiring six staff members to carry out all of the site assignments. Non-weekend sample draws are less intensive and require fewer staff.

The Division intends to build on the recent improvements to the survey and anticipates better data collection and more accurate information going forward with the program. Table 5 compares 2016, 2017, and 2018 APAIS interview statistics. The results compare the first three years of RI State conduct of the survey. Notably the number of completed interviews has increased but refusal rates only slightly decreased. Staff will continue to develop strategies to reduce the number of refusals.

The higher number of completed interviews is a function of higher angler encounter rates. During the early sampling waves of 2016, the Division was still learning the nuances of conducting the survey. A key part of the process involved adjusting the site pressures used by NOAA Fisheries to make the random assignments directing where interviews take place. Rhode Island site pressures needed adjustment because they were not resulting in random draws that would direct field interviewers to popular fishing sites. The adjustments have been accomplished and their effectiveness is reflected in a higher number of completed interviews in 2017 and 2018 relative to 2016. Field interviewer production rates also contributed to more completed interviews in 2017 and 2018. Production rates increased from an average of 5.4 interviews/assignment in 2016 to 7.2 interviews/assignment in 2017 and then decreasing slightly to 6.6 in 2018. The increased field interviewer production rates are the result of the experience gained in our first year of the program and a more refined training regimen. It is anticipated to improve in 2019 as there are 4 field interviewers returning from 2018. These field interviewers have a year of training which should foster higher productivity.

Refusal rates remain level between 2016 and 2018. The Division will continue its outreach efforts to reduce this statistic. Most of the refusals occur in Party/Charter mode. Staff has been focused on obtaining interviews from all clients from any given charter boat trip to bring this number down with some good preliminary results. Since 2016, any angler that is not interviewed from a boat party from which at least one angler was interviewed is coded as an initial refusal, and the count of missed anglers only refer to anglers who were eligible but could not be interviewed because the interviewer was busy interviewing other anglers. This procedural change has increased the number of refusals in this mode. Last year the Division constructed a kiosk at the main charter boat dock in the state. The kiosk is meant to raise awareness to the survey and provide a central location from which our field interviewers may operate.

Table 4a. APAIS Interview Statistics from 2016 Assignments. (CH = Party/Charter, PR = Private/Rental Boat, SH = Shore, HB = Head Boat)

Year	Wave	Mode	Assignments	Completed	Initially Refused	Language Barrier	Missed Anglers	Productivity
2016	2	CH	18	0	0	0	0	0
2016	2	HB	6	103	53	2	0	17.17
2016	2	PR	18	3	7	0	1	0.17
2016	2	SH	18	10	3	1	7	0.56
2016	3	CH	28	94	343	24	11	3.36
2016	3	HB	13	161	101	20	0	12.38
2016	3	PR	43	89	89	7	25	2.07
2016	3	SH	31	52	16	15	29	1.68
2016	4	CH	30	168	573	22	80	5.6
2016	4	HB	18	308	313	54	0	17.11
2016	4	PR	63	225	168	40	111	3.57
2016	4	SH	42	156	103	74	69	3.71
2016	5	CH	28	146	327	27	53	5.21
2016	5	HB	12	168	65	32	0	14
2016	5	PR	43	274	137	23	62	6.37
2016	5	SH	29	77	28	19	28	2.66
2016	6	CH	10	29	33	0	0	2.9
2016	6	HB	5	45	16	34	0	9
2016	6	PR	30	17	10	0	1	0.57
2016	6	SH	25	20	2	7	3	0.8
2016			510	2145	2387	401	480	5.44

Table 4b. APAIS Interview Statistics from 2017 Assignments. (CH = Party/Charter, PR = Private/Rental Boat, SH = Shore, HB = Head Boat)

Year	Wave	Mode	Assignments	Completed	Initially Refused	Language Barrier	Missed Anglers	Productivity
2017	2	CH	11	0	0	0	0	0
2017	2	HB	4	59	5	3	0	14.75
2017	2	PR	14	27	2	5	5	1.93
2017	2	SH	14	38	8	0	8	2.71
2017	3	CH	38	164	260	2	29	4.32
2017	3	HB	12	192	130	43	0	16
2017	3	PR	52	229	90	24	40	4.4
2017	3	SH	35	174	99	59	77	4.97
2017	4	CH	34	596	422	18	250	17.53
2017	4	HB	17	319	218	32	0	18.76
2017	4	PR	69	609	235	67	251	8.83
2017	4	SH	52	384	136	100	128	7.38
2017	5	CH	37	279	306	1	105	7.54
2017	5	HB	11	118	50	5	0	10.73
2017	5	PR	58	335	126	10	103	5.78
2017	5	SH	39	169	36	21	59	4.33
2017	6	CH	10	20	28	0	8	2
2017	6	HB	6	56	36	10	0	9.33
2017	6	PR	29	46	24	4	8	1.59
2017	6	SH	18	27	6	12	21	1.5
2017			560	3841	2217	416	1092	7.22

Table 4c. APAIS Interview Statistics from 2018 Assignments. (CH = Party/Charter, PR = Private/Rental Boat, SH = Shore, HB = Head Boat)

Year	Wave	Mode	Assignments	Completed	Initially Refused	Language Barrier	Missed Anglers	Productivity
2018	2	CH	3	0	0	0	0	0
2018	2	HB	3	45	3	6	0	15
2018	2	PR	17	8	5	7	0	0.47
2018	2	SH	22	96	38	1	19	4.36
2018	3	CH	43	169	257	3	84	3.93
2018	3	HB	12	154	41	25	0	12.83
2018	3	PR	54	229	98	32	79	4.24
2018	3	SH	61	230	136	54	114	3.77
2018	4	CH	54	612	578	12	385	11.33
2018	4	HB	19	354	177	21	0	18.63
2018	4	PR	73	452	151	37	185	6.19
2018	4	SH	53	322	83	81	134	6.08
2018	5	CH	42	284	361	7	158	6.76
2018	5	HB	13	135	69	38	0	10.38
2018	5	PR	63	435	94	33	178	6.9
2018	5	SH	40	204	59	72	98	5.1
2018	6	CH	10	14	61	0	11	1.4
2018	6	HB	8	69	58	59	0	8.63
2018	6	PR	18	67	17	4	35	3.72
2018	6	SH	28	49	11	7	41	1.75
2018			636	3928	2297	499	1521	6.57

Table 5. Summary of APAIS interview Statistics from 2016 – 2018 assignments by wave.

Year	Wave	Completed	Refused	Missed	Percent Refused	Ratio Refused/Missed
2016	2	116	63	8	35.20%	7.88
2016	3	396	549	65	58.10%	8.45
2016	4	857	1157	260	57.45%	4.45
2016	5	665	557	143	45.58%	3.90
2016	6	111	61	4	35.47%	15.25
2016		2145	2387	480	53.00%	4.97
2017	2	124	15	13	10.79%	1.15
2017	3	759	579	146	43.27%	3.97
2017	4	1908	1011	629	34.64%	1.61
2017	5	901	518	267	36.50%	1.94
2017	6	149	94	37	38.68%	2.54
2017		3841	2217	1092	36.60%	2.03
2018	2	149	46	19	23.58%	2.42
2018	3	782	532	277	40.49%	1.92
2018	4	1740	989	704	36.24%	1.40
2018	5	1058	583	434	35.53%	1.43
2018	6	199	147	87	42.48%	1.69
2018		3928	2297	1521	36.90%	1.51

IV. Issues & Initiatives

Increasing the Number of Local Vendors

Although the internet remains the most convenient means for obtaining a license for most people, it is apparent that a portion of the population continues to prefer to obtain a license, in-person, at a local store or shop. Such individuals may either not have, or may not be comfortable using, a home computer and printer. Additionally, some individuals may have the need to pay for their license using cash, instead of a debit or credit card, which is required for the online transaction. This precipitates the need to maintain and increase brick and mortar vendors in RI.

To date, there are over 30 local vendors authorized to issue licenses at their places of business. This is up from just seven vendors at the start of the 2011 fishing season. The locations of the 30+ vendors cover the major population areas of Rhode Island, including Block Island. Increasing the number of vendors should remain a top priority, since adding more vendors to the program will make it easier for more people to get their licenses, thereby enhancing compliance.

In 2018 DEM successfully rolled out a new outdoor recreational licensing system which allows saltwater, freshwater, and hunting licenses to be purchased online via a single transaction. Prior to 2018, the saltwater and freshwater licenses were already available online, but hunting licenses were still being issued via a paper system. The new system

has both an online and agent module to allow both online and brick and mortar sales outlets. Combining all three licenses into one system has resulted in the saltwater license being available at more brick and mortar locations. The increased access to the fishing license and a substantial outreach campaign associated with the new system rollout likely helped increase license sales by ~8% in FY2018.

Developing Regulations for the License Program

In 2010 the Division developed and enacted comprehensive regulations for the recreational license program. The regulations largely codify the key statutory provisions governing the license program.

Meeting with the Recreational Saltwater License Study Group

The Division plans to continue meeting annually with the Recreational Saltwater License Study Group, facilitated through RISAA. This ad-hoc group worked closely with the Division on the development of the original saltwater recreational license bill. The purpose of these annual meetings is to review and get input on the status of the overall license program, as well as the draft budget for the saltwater license restricted receipt account. These meetings are in addition to, not in lieu of, the Council and public comment processes set forth by the license statute.

Allowing Volunteer Contributions to the Restricted Receipt Account

It has been suggested that some anglers and spear fishers would welcome the opportunity to make an additional, voluntarily contribution to the restricted receipt account associated with the license program at the time they purchase their license. It is unclear whether this could be done without additional statutory authority, but if there is enough interest on the part of the Rhode Island recreational fishing community to pursue the initiative, it can be pursued further. Examples of voluntary methods for contribution include license plate programs and donations on state tax forms. There are no proposals to develop additional means of acquiring voluntary contributions at this time.

Streamlining the Online License Renewal Process

The Division has continued to coordinate with RII in an effort to streamline the renewal process, namely by having prior contact information recalled and re-inserted, with an onus on the licensee to verify that it is up-to-date and accurate. Because phone numbers remain an important data field, the system still requires phone numbers to be re-entered every year, to help ensure that they are up-to-date and accurate. Given the recent shift in MRIP's methodology to a mail-based survey, the address of the applicant has emerged as the key data element. It is unclear if the telephone number will become self-populated from previous license data after the switch is made to the mail survey, but for now it will still be a required data element of the RI program.

The new online system also eased the process of license renewal by assigning a new unique identifying number to each license holder that directly links to an account in the system. These user accounts maintain a history of past transactions and store all demographic information.

The above-noted changes have reduced the time it takes to renew recreational saltwater fishing licenses online.

Compliance

As noted above, the total number of licenses issued over the past three years remained level at approximately 42,000, until 2016 and 2017 when it increased to approximately 47,000. During the 2018 fiscal cycle, the total increased again to over 50,000 licenses. Increases were seen in both the resident and non-resident demographic. Although it is too soon to predict whether these numbers will be sustained, it is a positive sign indicating that general awareness to the licensing program has increased. The presence of APAIS field interviewers dressed in Division uniforms may have helped in this regard, but there is a general sense that the Division's commitment to ongoing public outreach and education regarding the license program is having a positive effect.

Knowing how closely the number of licenses issued tracks the actual number of anglers is key to assessing the overall effectiveness of the saltwater license program. Environmental Police Officers from DEM's Division of Law Enforcement (DLE) conduct routine field checks of recreational anglers and spear fishers – onshore and at-sea -- to ensure compliance with the saltwater license requirement. On average, approximately 1,200 license checks take place annually. These checks reveal an approximate 90% compliance rate with the saltwater license program. According to DLE, this is similar to rates reported by other regional law enforcement agencies. While a 90% compliance rate is encouraging, the need to maintain a high level of awareness regarding the saltwater license program is essential, given the number of new participants who enter the fishery each year.

The Division will continue its efforts to maintain a high level of compliance with the program. Several ideas offered by the Recreational Saltwater License Study Group are being pursued. The license program allows applicants to provide email addresses, voluntarily, when obtaining or renewing a license. Since 2017, the Division has used these email addresses to send electronic reminders regarding renewals. The new, combined online recreational licensing system will allow the Division to continue this functionally for all three types of recreational licenses types.

It is generally recognized that most recreational anglers who regularly fish are aware of the recreational license requirement, and that non-compliance issues generally pertain to the casual angling population. To address this compliance gap, the Division expanded its distribution of its annual saltwater fishing magazine to more diverse locations throughout the State, such as popular tourist hotels and attractions.

V. Expenditures and Budget

Preface

The goal of the saltwater recreational fishing license is to promote healthy and diverse recreational fisheries which are easily accessible by the fishing public. By providing funds to promote better data collection and stock assessment, the license leads to better management programs which should ensure sustainable fishing into the future. Robust fishing opportunities coupled with modern, well thought out, and convenient fishing access is ultimately the best strategy to increase awareness of the license and achieve broad participation in the program by all Rhode Islanders. To this end, the saltwater recreational license program continues to direct license fee revenues to recreational fishing programs aimed specifically at meeting these overarching goals and objectives.

As noted previously, in accordance with the provisions of the RIGL Chapter 20-2.2, all funds from the saltwater license fees are deposited into a restricted receipt account that can only be used for the following purposes:

- Administering and enforcing the Rhode Island license program;
- Managing Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries, with particular reference to improving state-based recreational fishery catch and effort statistics and stock assessments; and
- Enhancing recreational fishing opportunities in the State.

The account does not need to be drawn down every year. In fact, for large capital-improvement projects, it is necessary to accumulate funds over multiple years to achieve funding levels sufficient to cover project costs. Moreover, budget categories are fluid in terms of annual needs and expenditures. As such, underages, relative to projected costs, in a given budget category in one year can be used to cover overages in that same category in a subsequent year, and vice versa.

The Division undertakes a range of programs that address and support recreational fishing interests in Rhode Island. These programs are largely funded via a federal grant administered by the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) Program. The SFR Program is derived from excise taxes on fishing and boating equipment and is structured as a user-pay/user-benefit program. The SFR program is the primary source of funding for recreational fishing programs in RI, providing some \$2 million annually. SFR grants require a 25 percent non-federal match.

The primary DEM programs pertaining to recreational fishing fall into the following general categories:

- Fish stock assessments
- Recreational catch and effort estimates
- Management programs and regulations
- Boating and fishing access

- Artificial reefs and habitat protection/enhancement
- Public information, outreach, and education
- Enforcement

In developing annual budgets for the recreational saltwater license account, the Division draws upon the following guidelines: expenditures must be consistent with the licensing statute; address the needs and interests of the recreational fishing community in Rhode Island; and maximize opportunities and benefits by leveraging federal SFR funds whenever possible.

FY18 Expenditures

During the 2018 fiscal year, a total of \$109,267 in recreational license fee revenues was expended (Table 6). This amount is down considerably from the \$214,858 expended in FY2017. Of the total FY2018 expenditures:

- \$14,129 was used to hire two additional seasonal field interviewers to accomplish additional MRIP intercept interviews.
- \$86,105 was used for personnel and equipment costs in support of the Division's finfish surveys for stock assessments.
- \$277 was used for the management of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Program.
- \$720 was used to support the Division's boating/fishing access site maintenance program. Maintenance performed at marine shore fishing access sites included mowing and removal of brush, tree limbs, and downed trees. Litter and trash is removed weekly, or biweekly as needed. Fishing line recycle boxes overseen by the Division are emptied of fishing line. Snow was plowed in some saltwater access areas. Location and regulation signs were inspected monthly at each fishing site and repaired or replaced as needed. Specifically:
 - Camp Cronin – grade and repair parking area, installed signs and trash removal;
 - Arranged placement of portable sanitary facilities at Quonochontaug, Galilee, Deep Hole, Sakonnet, Black Point salt water fishing access areas from April through October;
 - Weekapaug fishing access-grade road and parking area, signage, trash and install new location sign. Removed trash following volunteer cleanup;
 - Charlestown Breachway-periodically checked area and removed trash from boat ramp area;
 - Quonochontaug- repair and grade road and parking area, repair top of ramp, signs replaced, trash removal, cut back road side, remove and dispose of discarded boat trailer;
 - Seapowet- relocate kiosk to new parking lot and install new signage;
 - Deep Hole fishing area- signage, repair snow fence, grade parking lot and road;
 - Kings Beach Fishing access- delivered gravel;
 - Black Point-replaced regulation signs.

- Posted signs for no parking and trailers only at boat ramps throughout state.
 - Removed trash from portajons at Cronin, Deep Hole, Weekapaug and Quonochontaug.
 - Assist with deceased mammal removal as needed at marine fishing areas.
 - Assist with mixing oyster clutch for restoration projects and developing staging area.
 - Supervised and provided oversight at annual float removal and winter storage of docks at Mt Hope, Haines Park, Galilee and Fort Adams boat ramps with contract vendor- Steel Giraffe. Assisted with the spring installation.
 - Colt Park-checked periodically and removed trash, contracted dock services;
 - Goddard Park-contracted dock services and removed debris from ramp area;
 - Narrow River Ramp- graded parking area and installed new regulation signs;
 - Pawcatuck River Boat Ramp, Westerly- removed debris and trash reported by enforcement and made repairs to dock bumpers. Continued to monitor ramp damage;
 - Sakonnet Point boat ramp-replaced signs;
 - Galilee Boat Ramp-repair parking lot, contracted dock services, checked periodically and replaced signs;
 - Ft. Adams - transported gravel for fill and contracted dock services;
 - Gull Cove-picked up trash from citizen cleanup and signage.
- \$8,036 was used for public education, information, and outreach, including production of the fifth annual Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing Guide, the one-page laminated fishing abstract, and other outreach materials.

Table 6. FY2018 Recreational Saltwater License Program - Expenditures

Category	FY17 Carryover	FY18 Revenue	FY18 Available	FY18 Expended
Enhanced MRIP Data Collection	\$78,703	\$11,696.70	\$90,400	\$14,129
Boating/Fishing Access I	\$67,865	\$46,786.80	\$114,652	\$0
Boating/Fishing Access II	\$37,927	\$11,696.70	\$49,624	\$720
Rec Fisheries Support	\$21,813	\$11,696.70	\$33,510	\$277
Fish Stock Assessment Support	\$32,221	\$116,967.00	\$149,188	\$86,105
Artificial Reef	\$0	\$11,696.70	\$11,697	\$0

Public Education, Information, and Outreach	\$23,459	\$23,393.40	\$46,852	\$8,036
TOTAL	\$229,767	\$233,934.00	\$495,922	\$109,267

FY19 Budget

The proposed budget for FY19 is set forth in Table 7. It is anticipated that the restricted receipt account will receive \$200,000 from FY19 license sales, and the proposed FY19 budget is based on that amount. The revenue will be allocated into each of the budget categories based on short- and long-term spending projections.

Table 7. FY2019 Recreational Saltwater License Program – Budget

Category	FY18 Carryover	FY19 Revenue	FY 19 Available	FY19 Budgeted
Enhanced MRIP Data Collection	\$76,271	\$0	\$76,271	(\$15,000)
Boating/Fishing Access I	\$114,652	\$40,000	\$154,652	(\$150,000)
Boating/Fishing Access II	\$48,904	\$0	\$48,904	(\$10,000)
Rec Fisheries Support	\$33,510	\$10,000	\$43,233	(\$10,000)
Fish Stock Assessment Support	\$63,083	\$120,000	\$183,083	(\$150,000)
Artificial Reef	\$11,697	\$20,000	\$31,697	(\$10,000)
Public Education, Information, and Outreach	\$38,816	\$20,000	\$58,816	(\$10,000)
TOTAL	\$386,655	\$200,000	\$586,655	(\$365,000)

- **Enhanced MRIP Data Collection (\$15,000)**

Proposal: Continue to expand the recreational catch and effort data collection program for Rhode Island (under the MRIP sampling umbrella) by providing funding for add-on intercept surveys to increase the overall precision of the overall catch estimates and better enable mode-specific (e.g., shore-based) estimates.

Rationale: The MRIP program is the major source for marine recreational catch and effort fishing assessments. Data collected via the program is used to estimate catch (landings and discards) and effort by species/state/mode/wave. Estimates of catch and effort are used to develop stock assessments for all species, including striped bass, summer flounder, scup, tautog, bluefish, winter flounder, cod, black sea bass, and weakfish. In addition, indices of abundance using catch per unit of

effort are incorporated into age-structured models to track abundance in comparison to other fisheries independent surveys. Estimates of catch and effort can have high variability in part due to sampling levels. These sampling levels are directly correlated to the level of funding allocated for each survey.

The marine recreational catch and effort fishing assessments yield fishery dependent information which, coupled with the fishery independent trawl and seine surveys, serve as the basis for marine recreational fishing regulations. The accuracy and fairness of recreational fishing regulations is directly related to the quality and precision of the assessments. Better accuracy and precision will lead to a better understanding of fishing activities by mode. This information is paramount if the Division is to pursue mode splits such as differential regulations for shore-based fishermen versus boat-based fishermen. Mode specific regulations require adequate survey and sampling of the two modes to enable relatively precise estimates of respective catch and effort.

The proposed enhanced data collection initiative will continue to attempt to maintain sampling to prior levels (2002-2005). The \$15,000 investment will leverage an additional \$45,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$60,000 in total programmatic benefits. The \$60,000 will allow the Division to hire three additional seasonal field interviewers to staff additional samples ordered from NOAA Fisheries. The addition of these three staff members plus the full-time coordinator, one full-time field interviewer, and four seasonal field interviewers funded via the MRIP base grant from NOAA Fisheries bring the total number of RI staff working on the APAIS to nine. The Division has a contract with the ASMFC to provide staffing support for these employees. The \$15,000 budgeted for this category is derived from personnel costs incurred in 2018.

- **Boating/Fishing Access I (\$150,000)**

Proposal: Major renovations at Quonochontaug boat ramp.

Rationale: The next fishing access projects to be funded with recreational saltwater license funds will be the ramp located at the Quonochontaug fishing area. This boat ramp is heavily used during the summer and fall. During the winter of 2017 the ramp sustained significant erosional damage. The damage is such that the existing ramp needs to be completely replaced and regraded. Originally the project was to have been completed in spring of 2019, but it has been delayed by a year. Using \$150,000 in license fee revenue to leverage \$450,000 in SFR funds will generate \$600,000 for this project, enabling it to be fully funded through final construction.

- **Boating/Fishing Access II (\$10,000)**

Proposal: Continue to support the Division's boating/fishing access site maintenance program.

Rationale: The Division is responsible for maintaining 60 state-owned and operated boating/ fishing access sites used by an estimated 28,000 boats that are less than 24 feet in length. In order to support the needs and interests of the recreational fishing/boating community in RI, it is as important to keep RI's public access points clean and functional as it is to build new ones. The allocation of funds from the license fee account, leveraged with federal funds, supports the Division's ability to properly maintain state-owned boating/fishing access sites throughout Rhode Island. The \$10,000 investment will leverage an additional \$30,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$40,000 in total programmatic benefits. The \$10,000 budgeted for this category is based on prior year expenditures. In FY18, a new funding source was used to support a portion of the maintenance program covered by this budget category. As such, it was intended that draw-downs would be made to both sources of funding; however, the overlap inadvertently resulted in a larger than anticipated draw down from the new funding source, and a lesser than anticipated draw down from the license fee account. In FY19, this matter will be rectified such that the draw down from the license fee account will be comparable to prior years, and any additional funding will be used to support expanded maintenance services.

- **Recreational Fisheries Management Support (\$10,000)**

Proposal: Continue to provide staff support, equivalent to a full-time employee (FTE), for the Division's Recreational Marine Fisheries Program. Staff will coordinate a range of projects and activities that relate directly to priority marine recreational fishing issues.

Rationale: Staff resources are needed within the Division to focus on the following issues, all relating directly to the priority recreational fisheries management support:

- Coordinating the overall recreational license program, in concert with Rhode Island Interactive and local vendors; and serving as the conduit for data management between the program and NOAA Fisheries, pursuant to the Division's MOU with NOAA Fisheries.
- Coordinating recreational fishing assessments; continued coordination of RIDFW APAIS; serving on the ACCSP's Recreational Technical Committee; advancing Rhode Island's electronic reporting program.
- Coordinating the development of marine recreational fishing management programs in Rhode Island; applying recreational fishing assessments to recreational management programs; developing mode-specific recreational fishing management programs and other recreational fishing alternatives for important ASMFC-managed species.
- Serving as a principal point of contact for recreational fishing groups and organizations throughout Rhode Island.

- Assisting with the coordination of the Division’s boating/fishing access program – including assessment, maintenance, and management of existing sites; pursuing grants to upgrade/improve existing sites and develop new sites; and conveying information on access opportunities to the Rhode Island recreational fishing community.

The \$10,000 budgeted for this category will leverage an additional \$30,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$40,000 for staff support.

- **Fish Stock Assessment Support (\$150,000)**

Proposal: Support the continuation of finfish stock assessment surveys of recreationally important species in Rhode Island waters.

Rationale: The key programs funded via the federal SFR grant are the continuation of the Narragansett Bay trawl survey; the juvenile finfish seine survey conducted in the coastal ponds, and the newly developed fish pot survey. These projects are important annual finfish fisheries surveys in Rhode Island waters with long standing time series of data. In the past, these programs have been funded by the Division’s federal SFR grant and matched entirely with commercial fishing license fee revenues. Given the importance of these programs to the recreational fishing community, it stands to reason that a portion of the recreational fishing license fees should continue to cover the non-federal match requirements of the SFR grant pertaining to these projects. Project reports are submitted annually for these programs to USFWS and are available upon request. The \$150,000 investment will leverage an additional \$450,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$600,000 in total programmatic benefits. The amount allocated for this category is being increased in anticipation of providing partial funds to purchase a new research vessel which will be used as the platform for the Division’s black sea bass pot survey.

- **Artificial Reef Support (\$20,000)**

Proposal: The Division plans to pursue the installation of small-scale artificial reefs adjacent to state fishing piers at locations throughout the state. The Division anticipates this artificial reef work will begin in 2019 and is budgeting \$20,000 from the license fee account for the initial phase(s) of this work.

Rationale: The Division is currently working on a fish habitat enhancement project with support from The Nature Conservancy and the USFWS SFR program. The project is in the early stages of a major investigation of fish habitat quality in upper Narragansett Bay over the next two years. This information will be used to develop plans for habitat improvement opportunities as well as evaluate the most effective methodologies. A variety of habitat enhancement and restoration techniques are being considered, including “reef balls.” The reef balls are small low-relief concrete domes with various holes to provide shelter for small

fish. The Division is planning to place an array of these reef balls at the Sabin Point and Rocky Point fishing piers, under construction. Once complete the Division will evaluate other locations for deployment.

The \$20,000 budgeted for this category will leverage an additional \$60,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide a total of \$80,000 for this category.

- **Public Education, Information, and Outreach (\$10,000)**

Proposal: Continue the annual one-page water-resistant regulation abstract and the Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing Magazine; fund a youth fishing camp conducted by the Rhode Island Saltwater Angler's Association; and purchase new field interviewer uniforms.

Rationale: Although compliance with the new license program has generally been good, it is clear that a number of recreational fishermen and spear fishers remain unaware of the program, not only in terms of the need to obtain a license, but also with regard to the purpose of the program and the benefits it provides to the recreational fishing community. Since a primary purpose of the license program is to develop a comprehensive database of contact information for all recreational fishermen and spear fishers, it makes sense to continue making a modest investment in public outreach, aimed at increasing awareness among the recreational fishing community regarding the license program, particularly during the summer season, thereby enhancing compliance and bolstering programmatic support.

Each year the Division publishes a one-page regulation abstract that contains the current year's recreational fishing rules and regulations. These are printed on glossy water-resistant paper and made available to anglers at various locations throughout the state. The abstracts are heavily utilized and raise awareness and foster compliance with current regulations.

In 2018, the Division published the sixth annual edition of the Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing Magazine. The publication, done in a colorful and appealing magazine style, offers a wealth of information of interest to the marine recreational fishing community in the State. The guide informs fishermen on the issues associated with the licensing program and the associated benefits. It also provides recreational fishing information as well as other issues of interest to the community, including current regulations, informative articles, and lists of local bait and tackle shops and party/charter boat services. While the Division continues to provide information to the Rhode Island recreational fishing community via the Division's website and an annual abstract that features recreational and commercial fishing regulations, the magazine enhances the Division's ability to connect with and inform recreational fishermen, and to promote recreational fishing in Rhode Island. The publication has been well-

received, and so it stands to reason to continue utilizing a relatively small portion of funds from the license account to fund it annually.

Youth programs have been recognized as important to keeping vitality in the recreational fishing industry as well as developing a more informed and responsible fishing populace. Prior to 2016, there were no dedicated saltwater fishing community-based instructional programs in Rhode Island. In June of 2016, RISAA conducted a successful pilot youth fishing camp for 50 children between the ages of 7 and 14. The camp focused not only on fishing techniques but also on fishing regulations, ecology and sustainable practices. This first educational program was a pilot program intended to show proof of concept, with the understanding that additional funding would be needed to keep it going into the future.

In 2017 and 2018, the Division provided such additional funding to RISAA to fill this need. The funding came from the Division's Aquatic Education program via credits for volunteer hours spent by RISAA members, and a USFWS Sportfish Aquatic Education grant.

For 2019, a memorandum of understanding has been established with RISAA to conduct the camp. The day camp will be run by RISAA with RIDEM participation and oversight. The camp will continue to accommodate 50 children between the ages of 7 and 14. The camp will be planned, coordinated, and implemented by a hired camp coordinator. The base location for the camp will be Rocky Point State Park in Warwick. Part of the camp will involve children fishing on boats launched at local marinas for two of the camp days. These two days will require the use of a bus to transport children to and from Rocky Point State Park. Vessel captains will be provided by RISAA. The camp will last for three days and include the following activities:

- Classroom-setting instruction of basic fish biology and identification, sustainable fishing methods and practices, fishing tackle, safety on and around the water, fishing regulations, and recreational data collection;
- Hands-on fish capture and identification using beach seines and dip nets;
- Hands-on knot tying and casting instruction;
- Hands-on fishing from shore; and
- Hands on fishing from boats.

The Division intends to continue to support and fund the camp into the future. While it is anticipated that volunteer hours will provide the match for the federal funds, recreational saltwater license funds will be available to cover any shortfall.

The \$10,000 budgeted for this overall category will be leveraged with an additional \$30,000 in USFWS SFR funding, resulting in \$40,000 for public information, outreach and education.

VII. Looking Ahead to FY20

There is cautious optimism that the increased revenue resulting from the uptick in license sales in FY16 – FY18 will hold steady into FY20 and thereafter. If so, the Division will coordinate closely with the Recreational Saltwater License Study Group, facilitated through RISAA, and other recreational fishing interests in the State to explore opportunities to improve and expand services and amenities for RI's recreational fishing community. Some potential examples include expansion of the artificial reef program, and additional, expedited capital-improvement projects at public access sites.

The Division is also considering the development of a legislative proposal to establish a single recreational license covering saltwater fishing, freshwater fishing, and hunting. Associated license fees and agent fees would be factored into the proposal, however, only to the extent necessary to address the new "combo" license. (There is no intent to make any change to the recreational saltwater license fee, per se.) Allowing for a combination purchase would enhance the customer service aspect of the Department's recreational licensing programs.



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Addendum

to the

Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Program Annual Report For FY 2018

In accordance with RIGL Section 20-2.2-10, the Rhode Island Division of Marine Fisheries (Division) presented the draft Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational License Program Annual Report for FY 2018 to the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council (Council) and attending members of the general public, at the Council meeting on April 1, 2019. Prior to the meeting, the draft report was provided to the Council members and posted on the Division's Marine Fisheries website. At the Council meeting, John Lake, Supervising Marine Biologist with the Division, provided a PowerPoint presentation covering the major points of the report. After the presentation, the meeting was opened to allow for questions, comments, and discussion. There were no public comments offered. After a brief discussion, the Council moved to offer its opinion that *the Licensing Program is continuing to meet its intended purpose*. The motion passed unanimously.

Submitted on Behalf of the Council

Robert Ballou

Robert Ballou, Chair