



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# For-Hire Data Makes a Difference

When you and your customers participate in recreational fishing surveys, you're making a vital contribution to the assessment and management of U.S. fish stocks. Recreational catch and effort data collected from recreational anglers and for-hire captains is combined with commercial, biological, and observer data to inform stock assessments and fisheries management decisions that aim to achieve sustainable fisheries and fishing opportunities into the future.

## Atlantic For-Hire Data Collection Programs

Different data collection programs gather different types of information about for-hire fishing activity. Taken together, these complementary programs provide a more complete picture of for-hire fishing than any single one could.

Our value as part of the recreational fishing data collection partnership is to produce year-to-year and long-term recreational fishing trends (patterns in fishing activity) covering many species, which is critical to inform stock assessments.



### SOUTHEAST REGION HEADBOAT SURVEY<sup>4</sup>

Region- and permit-based. Collects mandatory catch, effort, and economic data from **federally permitted headboats** selected to participate in the survey from **North Carolina to Texas**.



In-person  
survey

Phone  
survey

Electronic  
reporting

### SOUTHEAST FOR-HIRE INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC REPORTING PROGRAM<sup>5</sup>

Permit-based. Collects mandatory catch, effort, and economic data from vessels with federal for-hire permits for **South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper, Atlantic Dolphin/Wahoo, or Atlantic Coastal Migratory Pelagics** fishing in any state or federal waters.



<sup>1</sup> Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Office of Science and Technology, in partnership with states.

<sup>2</sup> Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office.

<sup>3</sup> Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division.

<sup>4</sup> Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

<sup>5</sup> Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Regional Office.

### LARGE PELAGICS SURVEY<sup>1</sup>

Region-based. Collects mandatory catch and effort data from private and charter boats targeting large pelagic species from **Maine to Virginia**.



### GREATER ATLANTIC ELECTRONIC VESSEL TRIP REPORTS<sup>2</sup>

Permit-based. Collects mandatory catch and effort data from federally permitted for-hire vessels with **New England and Mid-Atlantic Permits** fishing in any state or federal waters.



### ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES LANDINGS REPORTS<sup>3</sup>

Permit-based. **HMS Charter/Headboat Permit** holders fishing in any state or federal waters are required to report landings and dead discards of bluefin tuna, and non-tournament landings of billfish and swordfish, to NOAA Fisheries within 24 hours of trip completion.



### ACCESS POINT ANGLER INTERCEPT SURVEY<sup>1</sup>

Region-based. Collects catch data from shore, private boat, and for-hire charter boat anglers from **Maine to Mississippi**. Interviews are conducted at public-access sites like docks and marinas by trained state agency staff. In addition, interviewers obtain valuable biological data including fish length and weight to inform size composition of the recreational catch from year to year.



### FOR-HIRE SURVEY<sup>1</sup>

Region- and permit-based. Collects effort data from for-hire vessels from **Maine to Mississippi**. Participation in the survey is mandatory for vessels that possess **HMS Charter/Headboat Permits, or Gulf Charter/Headboat for Reef Fish For-Hire Fishing Permits (Limited Access)**, fishing in any state or federal waters. *Private recreational angler effort data is gathered through the mail Fishing Effort Survey.*



# For-Hire Captains: Your Questions Answered

**Why are selected for-hire customers rather than the captain or crew interviewed about their catch after returning from a fishing trip even if no fish were caught?**

We interview **each angler** on a fishing trip to maintain **consistency and comparability** of our estimates of the **number of fish caught per trip per angler** across for-hire, shore, and private boat modes. Our sample needs to be representative of all saltwater fishing trips, regardless of how many fish, if any, were caught. If we only interviewed anglers who caught fish, our catch estimates would be biased high.

**How does NOAA Fisheries use for-hire electronic logbook data?**

This information **supplements for-hire recreational fishing effort data collected** through the For-Hire Survey. Self-reported data need to be validated through independent observation to ensure scientific soundness. Data collected through electronic logbooks are used alongside data collected through the For-Hire Survey to estimate for-hire fishing effort and to inform fishery science and management decisions. We remain committed to working with state and regional partners to advance the uses of electronic reporting technologies in recreational fishing data collection.

**I hold a South Atlantic permit but only fish in the Gulf. Do I still need to report?**

**Yes.** All South Atlantic permit holders are required to participate in the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting program or the Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

**How does NOAA Fisheries select vessel representatives for the For-Hire Survey?**

**We randomly select vessels from NOAA Fisheries' vessel directory to participate in our For-Hire Survey.** The sample consists of active state and federally permitted vessels with county and state of operation, either a state registration number or U.S. Coast Guard documentation number, and a phone number. The vessel directory is updated regularly based on input from field samplers, state For-Hire Survey coordinators, and vessel representatives.

From this sample, vessels are grouped by state and type of vessel (charter boat or headboat). We randomly sample (call) a target of 10 percent of vessel representatives from each of these groupings with a minimum of three vessels per week. Since the sampling is random for each reporting week within a 2-month wave, there is a chance for a vessel's representative to get called more than once each wave, especially if there are fewer vessels in the grouping. Additional questions related to the Large Pelagics Survey are asked for vessels selected from Maine to Virginia with an eligible charter/headboat HMS permit.

**Can the permit-based mandatory reporting process be simplified?**

**We're working on it.** Our partners at the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program are developing a process to streamline for-hire reporting to reduce the reporting burden as much as possible.

**Why do I need to respond to multiple surveys?**

**It depends on the type(s) of permit you have.** For-hire operators are not called to participate in the general For-Hire Survey if they are required to submit electronic Vessel Trip Reports to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office. However, some for-hire operators who submit eVTRs to GARFO may be called as part of the Large Pelagics Telephone Survey (an add-on to the For-Hire Survey), which collects distinct information from active HMS permit holders from June through October. Different survey methods are used to gather different types of catch and effort data. For each federal permit held on that vessel, the operator of the vessel must abide by all permit requirements regardless of the type of fishing trip or location. Failure to report as required by a permit may result in delays in permit renewals.

**How does NOAA Fisheries evaluate the quality of your estimates?**

Our staff practices **quality assurance and control measures** before our estimates are published. While no statistical surveys are free of errors, we check for errors in data entry and investigate any unusual changes in catch and effort trends for high-interest species. We collaborate with our affected regional offices, science centers, and state partners to further investigate and compare notes on potential contributing factors or errors for very high or low estimates. We are working with our regional marine fisheries commission partners to strengthen the estimate review process. To aid in quality data usage, our catch and effort estimates are accompanied by a measure of precision, which indicates the margin of error or uncertainty surrounding the estimate.

All for-hire captains and anglers are encouraged to participate in our surveys. You are our eyes and ears on the water, and the central source of the information we use to estimate recreational fishing activity. Taking a few minutes to share information about your fishing trip is one of the most important contributions you can make for the successful conservation and management of our marine fisheries resources.

## Estimating Total For-Hire Catch



[countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://countmyfish.noaa.gov)

*Note: Field interviewers with our state partners play no role in law enforcement. We value your participation and privacy. Any personal information collected through our program is kept confidential.*

