

The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) in Hawaii: History and Key Considerations

I. Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS) and the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS)

HMRFS with the CHTS (and the For Hire Survey for charter boat effort, initially in Oahu and Maui) were developed prior to the inception of MRIP to obtain catch and effort estimates for all modes of non-commercial fishing. HMRFS was adapted from the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS), with additional questions to more fully address disposition of fish. HMRFS sampling was done by Hawaii state government (Division of Aquatic Resources, DAR) and CHTS by the NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology's contractor.

A. The charter boat sector, primarily in Oahu, refused to cooperate with HMRFS, and it was dropped ca. 2006. Subsequently, the paper trip reports/logbooks submitted to HDAR by charter boats, which are required to hold Commercial Marine Licenses and report catch by trip, have provided catch data for that mode.

B. At the request of local interests, a local subcontractor was brought on to conduct the CHTS in Hawaii beginning ca. 2009.

C. HMRFS and CHTS, plus charter logbooks, were conducted through 2017, when the new Fishing Effort Survey (FES), a mail survey to obtain effort data for shore and private boat modes, replaced the CHTS.

II. National Saltwater Angler Registry (NSAR)

The 2007 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act included establishment of a national angler registry. The new law required anglers to register with NOAA if fishing in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) 3 to 200 miles from shore or for anadromous species in all waters. It also allowed NOAA to exempt anglers from states that provided data that the Secretary determined to be sufficient for the agency's needs. The MRIP Registry Team then developed the NSAR final rule (see [50 CFR Subpart P](#)), which was adopted in 2008 and amended in 2012. The rule provides two ways for a state to be designated as an Exempted State:

A. A state can be designated if it requires licenses or registrations of essentially all parties involved in angling in both state and federal tidal waters, and agrees to provide its list of licensees/registrants to NOAA Fisheries at least annually. Separate exemptions are provided for for-hire vessels and for anglers.

B. A state can be designated if it participates in conducting a qualifying regional survey of recreational catch and effort (see: 50 CFR 600.1417). The rule defines regions, and required survey components are provided in the rule and in the referenced standards:

1. From the rule, a qualifying survey must: utilize angler registry data, or direct field counts to obtain angler effort, or other appropriate statistical means to obtain fishing effort; utilize angler registry data to identify individuals to be surveyed by telephone, mail or Internet if such regional survey includes a telephone survey component; and meet NOAA Fisheries survey design and data collection standards.

2. The survey design and data collection standards are [here](#).

III. Hawaii Registrations

All anglers fishing (angling and spear fishing) in the EEZ (presumably in boats, kayaks, or personal watercraft) off the Hawaiian archipelago are required to register with NOAA Fisheries, unless: they are fishing on a for-hire vessel that is in compliance with state and federal permitting/licensing requirements; they hold a non-commercial Main Hawaiian Bottomfish Permit; or they hold a Commercial Marine License. Persons fishing only in state waters are not required to register. The potential number of Hawaiian anglers/spear fishers required to register is relatively small as compared to those not required to register. Hence, any sample frame composed only of federal registrants will be considerably incomplete.

In addition, the number of federal registrations for Hawaii has significantly declined. In the first full year of the registration requirement, NOAA issued 7,893 registrations to persons who stated they intended to fish in Hawaii. That number has declined annually to 61 in 2017. The decline is presumed to have resulted from a decline in angler awareness of the requirement to register, due in part to reduced outreach and to lack of active enforcement of the requirement.

IV. Hawaii State Registry?

A more complete registry, potentially including all Hawaiian anglers and spear fishers could result from a state-enforced license or registration requirement. Multiple discussions with partners and stakeholders in Hawaii following the adoption of the final NSAR rule in 2008, resulted in the conclusion that it was very unlikely that Hawaii would enact legislation requiring anglers/non-commercial fishermen to register or purchase a license. In consultation with regional

members of the MRIP Operations Team and staff of the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), MRIP took the following actions:

A. NOAA Fisheries included in the 2012 NSAR rule amendment a provision that divided the Western Pacific into two MRIP “regions,” one for Hawaii and one for the Western Pacific Territories (Guam, American Samoa, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). This enabled the Territories to obtain Exempted State designation based on their participation in the Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network. It also provided an opportunity for our partners in Hawaii to design a qualifying regional survey just for the Hawaiian waters and the surrounding EEZ.

B. MRIP supported a series of MRIP projects to test alternative survey methods for Hawaii that could be evaluated and ultimately combined into a single regional survey that would qualify the state for an MRIP exemption. These studies were primarily organized and led by the PIFSC and the Western Pacific Council members of the MRIP Teams.

C. The results of the various studies were reviewed by the ad hoc MRIP Regional Implementation Team (the “MRIP Regional Team”) in its [2018 Pacific Islands Regional Implementation Plan](#). As of late 2018, the MRIP Regional Team is planning a workshop in January 2019, at which independent experts and technical representatives from MRIP partner organizations will evaluate the results of the studies, assess available options, and recommend a suite of surveys for MRIP certification and use in a regional survey for Hawaii that fulfills the requirements of 50 CFR 600.1417.

V. Next Steps—Decision Time?

The key question facing MRIP partners in Hawaii is: Will Hawaii enact a registration or license requirement and continue to use the HMRFS (with MRIP improvements to APAIS) and the FES, or will it not and therefore proceed to decide on the components of a new series of surveys to enable estimation of non-commercial catch and effort? Some advantages of going with a license and the FES include:

- A. Likely to be less expensive;
- B. Transition Plans will be required for any changes, but less costly and extensive benchmarking and transition plan implementation is likely for FES/APAIS;
- C. Less need for training and new procedures for HDAR staff;

D. Assuming FES continues, having a registration database will render the FES more efficient and improve its outputs (see R. Andrews e-mail dated 10/11/2018).