



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# NOAA Fisheries National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy

**Russ Dunn**

MAFAC Meeting  
November 14, 2023

# 2023 National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy Statement

“It is the policy of NOAA Fisheries to foster, support, and enhance a broadly accessible and diverse array of sustainable saltwater recreational and non-commercial fisheries for the benefit and enjoyment of the nation.”



# Key Policy Updates

- Added Climate and EEJ goals
- Strengthened focus on sustainability
- Incorporated:
  - offshore development
  - depredation
- Expanded reference to:
  - cooperative & collaborative data collection
  - engagement, communications, education
- Committed to track and measure implementation



# Recent Focus

## Updated Rec Fish Policy & Implementation Plans

Released September 2023

Focusing on implementation and tracking progress

## Cooperative Research

Finalized agreements for Recreational Biological Sampling Project

Additional support for West Coast Rockfish Project

## Recreational Data

Working across agency to develop plan to collaboratively re-envision  
state-federal rec data partnerships

Rec economic workshop tech memo published



# Recent Focus

## Engagement

American Fly Fishing Trade Association

Confluence - September 2023

National Fishing and Boating Week - June 2023

## Vessel Speed Rules

Petition declined in Gulf of Mexico - Rice's Whale

North Atlantic Right Whale Technology Workshop March 2-5, 2024 in

Washington, DC

## Habitat

Issued solicitation of proposals for FY24 cooperative habitat conservation projects (October 2023)



# Recreational Fisheries FY24 Priorities

- Implementing the National Recreational Fisheries Policy
- Engagement & events
- Partnerships to improve recreational data
- Cooperative research
- Habitat
- Equity & Environmental Justice



# Thank You

## Russ Dunn

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Office of Science  
and Technology

Marine  
Recreational  
Information  
Program

# NOAA Fisheries' Fishing Effort Survey Pilot Study and Next Steps

**November 2023**

Evan Howell

Director, NMFS Office of Science and Technology

# FES Pilot Study Key Points

- One of several studies to evaluate potential sources of bias in Fishing Effort Survey.
- Revising order of questions in pilot resulted in **fewer observed reporting errors/illogical responses**.
- Resulting **effort estimates lower for shore and private boat** than estimates produced from current design.
- **Limitations:** Conducted over 6 months, smaller sample size than full FES administration, **results varied by state and fishing mode**.



# Switching 2 & 12-month Fishing Activity Questions

FES: SH:PR/2:12

**15** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in North Carolina?

*The shore includes docks, bridges, causeways, beaches, banks, or any other shore-based place or area. Do not include freshwater fishing.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from shore in last 12 months → **Go to question 16**

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in January and February of 2018

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months, including January and February

**16** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in North Carolina?

*Do not include freshwater trips or trips where a paid captain or crew helped locate and catch fish.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from private boat in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in January and February of 2018

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months, including January and February

EXP1: SH:PR/2:12

**15** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in <<statefull>>?

*The shore includes docks, bridges, causeways, beaches, banks, or any other shore-based place or area. Do not include freshwater fishing.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from shore in last 12 months → **Go to question 16**

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in <<relperiod2>>

**16** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in <<statefull>>?

*Do not include freshwater trips or trips where a paid captain or crew helped locate and catch fish.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from private boat in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in <<relperiod2>>

EXP2: PR:SH/2:12

**15** How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in North Carolina?

*Do not include freshwater trips or trips where a paid captain or crew helped locate and catch fish.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from private boat in last 12 months → **Go to question 16**

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in November and December of 2019

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months, including November and December

**16** How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in North Carolina?

*The shore includes docks, bridges, causeways, beaches, banks, or any other shore-based place or area. Do not include freshwater fishing.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from shore in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in November and December of 2019

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months, including November and December

EXP3: PR:SH/12:2

**15** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in North Carolina?

*Do not include freshwater trips or trips where a paid captain or crew helped locate and catch fish.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from private boat in last 12 months → **Go to question 16**

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in November and December of 2019

**16** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in North Carolina?

*The shore includes docks, bridges, causeways, beaches, banks, or any other shore-based place or area. Do not include freshwater fishing.*

Did not recreational saltwater fish from shore in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in November and December of 2019



# Fishing Effort Survey Follow-up Study

- Revised design administered concurrently with current FES over full course of 2024 (**larger sample size over longer duration from pilot study**).
- New study design is informed by results of two previous pilot studies (one month waves, question order).
- Revised design includes **changing the order of questions and also increasing the administration of the survey** from every two months to monthly.
  - Study will determine **combined effects**, which allows for a more efficient transition/calibration process.
  - **Monthly sampling** is a priority of our partners and will produce **more frequent estimates and a shorter respondent recall** period that may also minimize reporting error.



# Follow-up Study & Next Steps

- Existing FES calibration **will be updated** to account for revised design
  - Calibration update work has started and will continue as needed into 2024 and 2025 pending results from the 2024 follow-up study
- Full implementation of an improved FES design would occur **no earlier than 2026** and would be dependent on:
  - Successful completion of the follow-up study and calibration updates
  - Favorable technical peer review and updated FES Transition Plan developed in coordination with partners on the MRIP Transition Team
  - Fully calibrated historic time series of catch and effort estimates
- FY24 - Working with Regional NMFS offices, Councils and Commissions to identify potential implications and actions
- Working across agency to develop plan to collaboratively re-envision state-federal rec data partnerships



# Assessment and Management Implications

- **Full potential impacts unknown** until we've completed follow-up study.
- Effort data from FES (where it is conducted) remains best (sometimes the only) available science for tracking relative year-to-year and long-term fishing effort activity trends.
- **Tracking Trends:** While the magnitude of the effort estimates may change from a revised survey design, fishing activity patterns over time (increases and decreases in activity) are expected to remain similar.
- **Stock status** relatively **consistent** when this trend info hasn't changed.
- Focus on **continued conversations with partners and programmatic improvements** to further mitigate disruption to assessment and management in light of continuous survey improvement.
- Opportunity to make fisheries management more **adaptive**.





# Thank You

## Evan Howell

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# Recreational Engagement Activities

- Recreational Economics Workshop (OST)
- California CPFV Fleet Cooperative Groundfish Sampling (SWFSC)
- Northeast Recreational Groundfish Study Fleet (NEFSC)
- Cooperative Tagging Program (SEFSC)
- Collaborative Habitat Conservation Projects and Workshops (OHC)
- Release Mortality Mitigation Gear and Materials (CFMC)
- Recreational Quota Entity Constituent Engagement (AKR)
- Protected Resources Outreach (PIR, SER)
- Family Fishing Days Events (ONMS, SER, GAR, WCR)



# Policy Goals

1. Support, maintain, and recover sustainable saltwater recreational and non-commercial fisheries resources, including protected species, and healthy marine and estuarine habitats
2. Promote inclusive and sustainable saltwater recreational and non-commercial fishing for the social, cultural, and economic benefit of the nation
3. Enable enduring participation in, and enjoyment of, saltwater recreational fisheries through science-based conservation and management
4. Advance climate-ready policies and programs to understand and respond to climate-driven changes and impacts on fishery resources and the ecosystem
5. Pursue and support equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of underserved and underrepresented communities in recreational and non-commercial fisheries and stewardship

