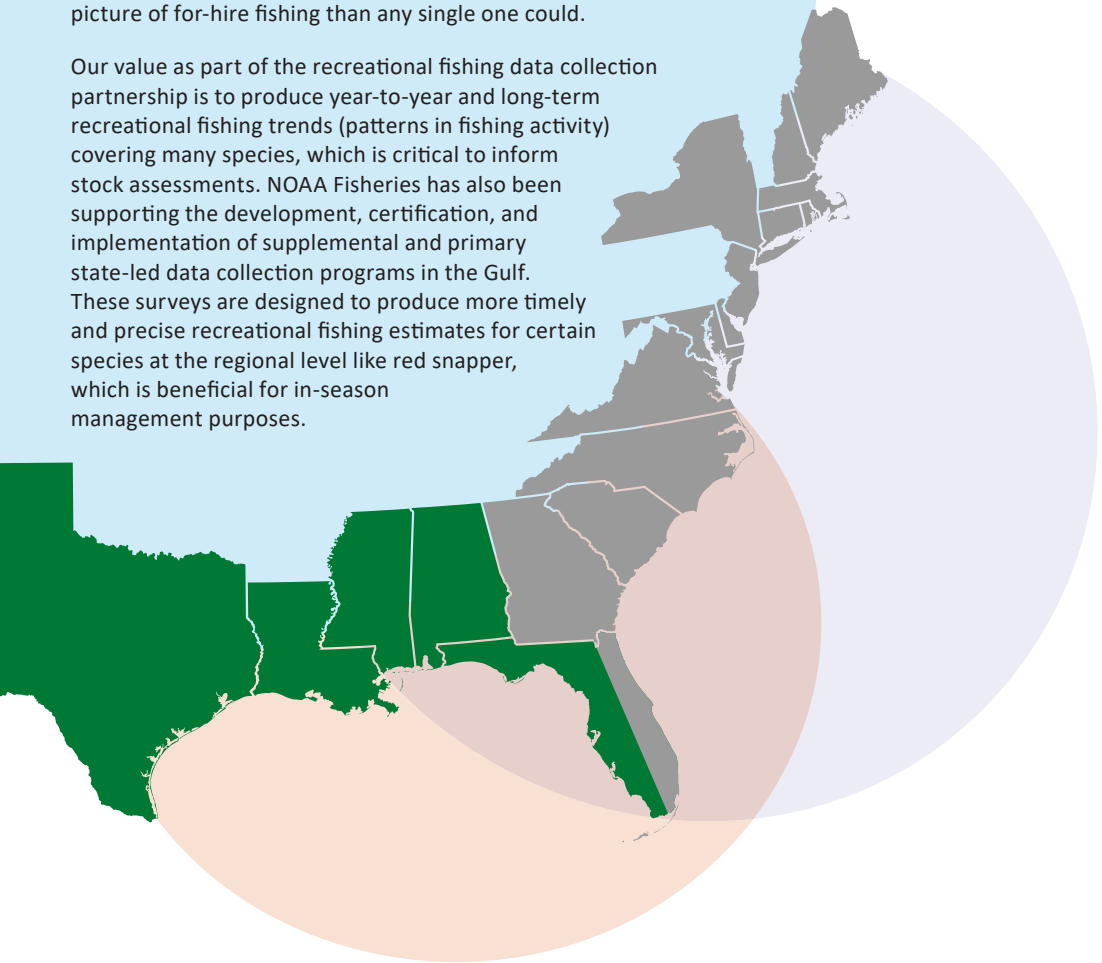
For-Hire Data Makes a Difference

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.

Gulf of America* 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. NOAA Fisheries has also been supporting the development, certification, and implementation of supplemental and primary state-led data collection programs in the Gulf. These surveys are designed to produce more timely and precise recreational fishing estimates for certain species at the regional level like red snapper, which is beneficial for in-season management purposes.



ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES LANDINGS REPORTS[1]

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[2‡]

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[2‡]

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 **Gulf Charter/Headboat for Reef Fish For-Hire Fishing Permits (Limited Access)**, or **HMS Charter/Headboat Permits**, fishing in any state or federal waters. *Private recreational angler effort data is gathered through the mail Fishing Effort Survey.*

SOUTHEAST REGION HEADBOAT SURVEY[3]

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**.

SOUTHEAST FOR-HIRE INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC REPORTING PROGRAM[4]

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. Headboat vessels with federal for-hire permits for the **Gulf of America** are also required to report to the Southeast Region Headboat Survey if selected to participate.

In-person survey | Phone survey | Electronic reporting

* Formerly Gulf of Mexico

[1] Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division.
[2] Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Office of Science and Technology, in partnership with states.
[3] Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Fisheries Science Center.
[4] Administered by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Regional Office.
‡ Louisiana and Texas rely solely on their own state-led recreational fishing data collection programs to obtain this information.

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.

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.

Why do I need to respond to multiple surveys?

It depends on the type(s) of permit you have. We do not collect duplicative for-hire effort data from for-hire customers. Different survey methods are used to gather different types of catch and effort data.

The Fishing Effort Survey is used to estimate effort from shore and private boat fishing modes (sampled using a U.S. Postal Service list of residential addresses, matched with NOAA Fisheries' National Saltwater Angler Registry). The For-Hire Survey is used to estimate effort estimates for for-hire vessels. Our dockside angler intercept survey is used to estimate catch-per-trip. The Southeast Region Headboat Survey collects catch, effort, and economic information in the South Atlantic and Gulf. 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.

Why do data collection methods change over time?

We are committed to providing quality recreational fishing catch and effort estimates. We routinely conduct research and pilot studies to identify and evaluate potential survey design improvements. Our data collection and estimation methods undergo extensive testing, evaluation, and independent peer review, and our work is informed by recommendations from an independent team of expert statistical consultants.

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

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.

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