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Office of Science
and Technology

Marine
Recreational
Information
Program

Tab F, No. 6

Federal Offshore Fishing Permits as a Tool to Improve Recreational Data

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Meeting
Gulfport, MS.

April 2023

Questions

NOAA posed the following questions to Council at last meeting:

- Is the permit solely to gather data on the universe of offshore anglers?
- Can additional information on federal recreational fishing be used to enhance and improve data collection for the sector?
- How might this information be used in the future to manage Gulf fisheries differently?



Approach

- Questions posed
- NOAA Survey designs
 - Surveys (state, regional and federal surveys)
 - Use of license information
- National Saltwater Angler Registry (NSAR)
- Q3: Management
 - Overview of ongoing related activities
- Q1: Permit scope and function
 - Setting goals and expectations
 - Potential improvements
- Q2: Enhancements and improvements
 - Improvements to Recreational Fishery Data Collection
 - Considerations
- Summary



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Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) At-a-Glance

- In-person interviews (through States) with saltwater anglers returning from fishing trips along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and in Hawaii
- Collects trip characteristics and catch information, of note:
 - Fishing mode (from shore, private boat, or for-hire vessel)
 - General area fished (where majority of fishing occurred)
 - Species, number, disposition of angler's catch
- Used to:
 - Estimate catch-per-trip



We sample using the [Public Access Fishing Site Register](#).

Fishing Effort Survey At-a-Glance

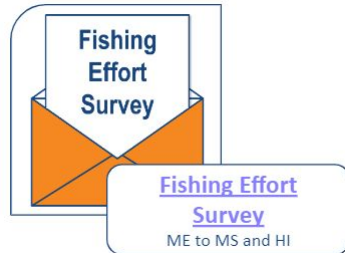
- Self-administered **mail survey** of **residential households** in coastal states
- Collects **trip information** for each resident of a responding household for specified two-month periods:
 - Number of days fished from **shore** in state of residence
 - Number of days fished from private or rental **boat** in state of residence
- Used to:
 - Estimate shore and private boat **fishing effort (angler trips taken)**



We sample using a USPS list of residential addresses, matched with [the National Saltwater Angler Registry](#).

Estimating Angling Effort

- Fishing Effort Survey (FES) used to determine state resident angler effort (trips taken)
- Intercept surveys used to adjust for non-resident angler effort
 - Determines proportions of effort to allocate to area fished
 - Inland Waters, State Territorial Seas (STS), Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)
 - Asks where the majority of fishing effort occurred. Catch is assigned to where the majority of fishing occurred



National Saltwater Angler Registry and Exemption

- Does not allow for universal saltwater angler registration coverage (Sec.401(g)(1) & (2) of the MSA):
 - Fishing in state waters is excluded unless angling for anadromous species;
 - States participating in NSAR and State Exemption Program agree to share either state saltwater fishing license/registration data or state recreational catch and effort survey data with NOAA Fisheries, as anglers in these states are exempt from registering through the national registry
- Each of the 5 Gulf States has an MOA with NOAA as part of state exemption program.
- Specified saltwater fishing individual and for-hire license data is to be submitted to NOAA annually by Jan. 15.
- Atlantic and Gulf states have been asked to update angler data electronically monthly since FES was implemented.

How might this information be used in the future to manage Gulf fisheries differently?

- Recreational fisheries initiatives at varied stages of development at regional and national levels to look at alternative/new management strategies and data uses
- Coordination of these efforts needed to:
 - More effectively assess needs and objectives;
 - Examine compatibility with current data collection programs;
 - Evaluate expected outcomes;
 - Conduct cost/benefit and risk analyses



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Is the permit solely to gather data on the universe of offshore anglers?

Careful consideration to permit scope: coverage and interaction with ongoing state and federal data collection programs

- Most existing permitted anglers covered through licensing and state survey participation requirements
- Would provide list of permitted anglers/vessel operators that fish offshore
 - Requires assumption universe of offshore anglers is identified through permit
 - Offshore anglers may not fish exclusively offshore
 - Unpermitted anglers may not fish exclusively inshore



Potential Improvements to Recreational Data Collection

- Modest improvements to current FES sampling efficiency
 - Used to identify and match to angling households
 - Increase hit rate on offshore angling households
 - If permit holders report differently than general license - may expect precision gain through stratification/post-stratification
 - Vessel based preferred over angler based permit
- Provide list frames for:
 - New permit-based effort sample survey
 - Operate as a standalone effort based survey
 - Could be used with APAIS to generate catch estimates
 - New Census-based reporting program
 - New permit-based panel reporting program
 - Rotating or fixed panel - used to provide information on catch and/or effort (e.g., discard counts and sizes, private access)
 - Mandatory reporting (logbook/Vessel Trip Reports)



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Can additional information on federal recreational fishing be used to enhance and improve data collection for the sector?

- Permit/Angler list-based approaches exist on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts (e.g., Large Pelagic Survey, Gulf States Surveys)
 - Compatibility is an issue with ongoing data collection efforts
 - Different survey methods - different estimates
 - Adds to an already complex system of surveys
 - Capture/recapture census-based reporting requires validation and enforcement
 - Addition to ongoing sampling efforts (State and federal dockside surveys)
- Panel surveys require recruitment and maintenance and have a high response burden
- Time/resources to establish and maintain permit and data management systems
- Changes to NOAA Surveys would have impacts beyond Gulf (Atlantic Coast, Hawaii)



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Summary

- Coordination of ongoing regional level recreational initiatives needed to identify overlapping needs and goals and reduce duplication of effort
- Ongoing federal surveys may have modest precision gains depending on permit structure and management - vessel permit preferred to angler permit
- Permit based specialized surveys (census or panel) could be used to improve released catch information and biological sampling but may also have utility helping to inform management/assessment related decisions
 - Validation of reported information
 - Treatment of existing survey data/estimates



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Summary Cont'd

- There are several recreational fisheries surveys being conducted in the Gulf. Challenges include:
 - Compatibility with existing surveys
 - Logistics of conducting another independent survey (or other surveys)
 - Infrastructure and support for data management, survey development and implementation
 - Survey instrument development, testing, implementation - OMB Approval, Support, Frame development and maintenance, Certification, Quality assurance (adherence to applicable data standards), data management, compliance, etc.
- Cost/benefit analysis needed to determine how other potential improvements (or status quo) match up against a federal permit based improvements



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Examples of current activity related to recreational data collection and fisheries management

- NASEM Review of recreational data and management strategies:
<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/data-and-management-strategies-for-recreational-fisheries-with-annual-catch-limits>
- NOAA Fisheries;
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/noaa-fisheries-response-national-academies-science-engineering-and-medicine-2021>
- SAFMC - Recreational reporting work group;
<https://safmc.net/workgroups/recreational-reporting-workgroup>
- MAFMC - Recreational Reform Initiative - “Percent change approach”
<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/hcr-framework-addenda>
- ACCSP - Atlantic Coast prioritized activities - MRIP Regional Implementation Plan;
<https://www.accsp.org/accsp-noaa-fisheries-release-plan-to-improve-atlantic-recreational-fisheries-data>
- GulfFIN - Gulf prioritized activities - MRIP regional Implementation Plan;
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/mrip-regional-implementation-plan-gulf-coast>
- State and regional level efforts - e.g., MD Governor’s Task Force Report, [Gulf States Transition Planning](#)