

# Overview of Recreational Catch and Effort Survey Programs



# Background

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- Southeast has the largest concentration of saltwater recreational fishing in the US (4.5 million anglers, 36 million trips annually)
- Recreational landings data are critically important for managing marine fish stocks
- Recreational landings data have been collected for several decades now
- Typically collected through multiple complementary survey approaches

# Overview of Existing Federal Recreational Surveys

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- Fishing Effort Survey (FES) – private angler effort mail survey for specific 2-month periods
- For-Hire Survey (FHTS) – weekly for-hire fishing effort telephone survey
- Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) – private angler and for-hire catch-per-trip at public fishing access sites



# Overview of Existing Recreational Surveys

## State Surveys

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- Texas – Texas Creel Survey catch , effort and landings data in 6-month intervals
- Louisiana – LA Creel Survey initiated in 2014 to replace MRIP. Phone/email survey to collect effort data from private anglers and for-hire & dockside survey to collect trip data. Weekly effort estimates



# Overview of Existing Recreational Surveys

## State Surveys

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- Alabama and Mississippi – mandatory reporting programs initiated in 2014/2015 targeting red snapper and more recently greater amberjack and gray triggerfish
  - Alabama Snapper Check requires web-based reporting for private and state charter vessel trips with landings and dockside validation to determine rate of non-reporting and average weights
  - Mississippi Tails & Scales requires declaring trip in advance; landings with mandatory reporting and dockside survey



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# Overview of Existing Recreational Surveys

## State Surveys

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- Florida – State Reef Fish Survey (2015) specialized survey for boat-based private anglers targeting a suite of managed reef species on east and west coasts
  - Utilizes a monthly US Postal mail survey sent to anglers with State Reef Fish permit to collect effort data and a year-round dockside survey that runs side-by-side with APAIS to collect catch and fishing trip information
  - APAIS and SRFS are complimentary and used together to provide a more accurate estimate of total harvested



# New Approaches

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- Alabama and Mississippi – In 2024 began testing the LA Creel Effort Survey module
  - Preliminary estimates showing results that follow fluctuating weather patterns and are comparable to effort estimates from mandatory reporting programs
  - In 2025 beginning a 12 month benchmarking study of the full LA Creel methodology (effort and dockside surveys)
  - Would implement a general survey covering all marine finfish species
  - If successful this brings three states into a standardized approach that will help increase the feasibility for use in science and management

# Putting it Together



- Collected through dockside interviews
- Allow for species identification, collection of biological measurements
- Generally good agreement among dockside surveys

- Collected through multiple survey methods
- Large differences in survey estimates between methods
- Estimated effort is the largest impact on the magnitude of estimated total catch



# Summary

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- Multitude of survey approaches to collect recreational effort data
- Estimates from various surveys produce vastly different results
- Great deal of uncertainty regarding the accuracy of current survey methods
- Research Plan within the Gulf State Survey Transition Plan is attempting to address some uncertainty
- Inflation Reduction Act RFP will implement research to test some novel approaches to effort and released catch data collection methods

A photograph taken from the back of a boat, looking out over the ocean. The boat's wake is visible in the foreground, with white foam and blue water. Three vertical poles or masts are visible, extending from the boat towards the horizon. The sky is a clear, deep blue. The word "QUESTIONS?" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the image.

QUESTIONS?