



NOAA
FISHERIES

NOAA Fisheries' Fishing Effort Survey Pilot Study and Next Steps

May 21-23, 2024

Dr. Evan Howell

Director

Office of Science & Technology

Fishing Effort Survey Key Points

- Researched potential sources of error in the FES as part of our **continuous improvement process** and **in response to concerns** from recreational fishing community that our private fishing trip (effort) estimates are too high
- **Throughout 2024, conducting large-scale study** to gain clearer understanding of differences in effort estimates between (based on results of prior [pilot studies](#)):
 - current design (administered every 2 months; asks about fishing activity first over last 2 months, then over last 12 months)
 - revised design (administered monthly; asks about fishing activity first over last 12 months, then over last 2 months)
 - Monthly sampling = more frequent estimates for fisheries management, shorter recall period to minimize reporting errors
- **We will know more in spring 2025** - full-scale comparisons between the current FES and the revised design. Contingent on favorable study results and transition planning, updated (calibrated) historical effort estimates would be available for use in science and management in spring 2026.



Assessment and Management Implications

- Potential effects **not species specific**
 - FES produces estimates of private fishing trip activity (shore/private boat effort), not specific to species
 - All species catch information is collected through dockside interviews (Access Point Angler Intercept Survey)
 - Total catch = effort x catch
- **Full potential impacts unknown** until we've completed follow-up study.
- MRIP recreational catch and effort estimates remain most comprehensive and best available information while the follow-up study is being conducted to corroborate results from the pilot study.

Tentative Timeline

2024

Administer revised design alongside current design throughout all of 2024.

Continue development of the updated FES calibration model to rescale the historical effort estimates produced using the current FES design to a revised design, so meaningful comparisons can be made between the two sets of data.

Work with Atlantic, Gulf, and Hawaii partners on preliminary planning for potentially transitioning to a new FES design.

2025

2025

Produce 2024 final estimates in spring 2025.

Complete study report. Compare data produced from the current FES and the revised design.

Provide opportunities for partners and the public to learn about the study results.

Obtain an independent peer review of the FES revised design and calibration model.

Make any updates to the FES calibration model as necessary to start calibrating the historical estimates.

2026

Produce the calibrated historical catch and effort estimates in time for the release of final 2025 estimates in spring 2026.

Earliest a revised design can be implemented.

Re-envisioning the Recreational Data Collection Partnership

Initial Goals

- Regional specificity and national coherence of program
- Clear roles, responsibilities, and lines of communication among partners
- Enhanced recreational data precision
- Standardization of data collection protocols
- Data transparency and open access
- Survey and estimation improvement frameworks
- Stakeholder collaboration and participation

Next Steps

- Initial webinars to orient key partners to the proposed process and seek initial feedback on the process (conducted April 24 and 25)
- Webinars with recreational fishing constituency to seek feedback on process (May 29 and 30)
- Partner Interviews
- Formulation of interagency topical working groups
- Visioning workshops
- Drafting of new vision and partnership framework (informed by interviews and workshops)
- Circulation of draft framework for feedback
- Development of transition teams and transition team planning
- Announcement and implementation of re-envisioned program partnership



Questions



NOAA
FISHERIES

Fishing Effort Survey Background

- Mail survey of residential households in coastal states; replaced the Coastal Household Telephone Survey in 2018
- 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 (trips taken)**

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



One-Month Waves Study Key Points

- Compared FES design to two options for one-month fishing activity questions
 - Current FES: asks about previous two-months collectively
 - Experiment 1: asked about previous single month
 - Experiment 2: asked about previous two months individually
- Findings suggested the two-month reference period of the FES wasn't a likely source of bias.
 - Asking about previous two-months individually seemed to mitigate potential recall bias in one-month estimates
- **Limitations:** Conducted in four states over six months with smaller sample sizes compared to the FES

[Image 11](#)
[Baez](#)

Question Order Change Study Key Points

- Revising order of two fishing activity questions 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.



Image: Tim Donovan/FL FWC

Switching 2 & 12-month Fishing Activity Questions

Experimental Questionnaire 1:
Shore:Private boat/
12 month:2 month

Experimental Questionnaire 2:
Private boat:Shore/
2 month:12 month

Experimental Questionnaire 3:
Private boat:Shore/
12 month:2 month

FES Question Order:
Shore:Private boat/
2 months:12 months

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

(Insert State)?

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 2022**

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 (Insert State)?

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 2022**

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

If you have more people in your household, continue to Household Member 2. If you have answered for all people in your household, please return your survey.