

MRIP Budget Strategy

NMFS' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) provides a national framework for developing, testing and implementing an improved marine recreational fishing data collection program. MRIP responds to National Research Council (NRC) recommendations and MSRA mandates to improve NMFS' recreational fishing surveys. NMFS has estimated a total cost of approximately \$14 M to fully address the NRC recommendations. This includes funding received in 2008 (\$3.5 M) and 2009 (\$2.7 M), plus additional funds requested in the President's 2010 Budget (\$2.8 M). The balance of the required funds would be sought in future budgets and would support larger sample sizes to increase the statistical precision and geographic and temporal resolution of the recreational fisheries harvest monitoring.

Funding in 2008 and 2009 for MRIP is supporting the redesign of the Agency's recreational fisheries surveys. A significant improvement under MRIP will be the development and implementation of a National Saltwater Angler Registry Program, which will provide a more efficient sampling frame for recreational fishing surveys. The Registry Program is a cooperative state-federal program for the registration of recreational fishing participants that will build the complete angler and for-hire vessel operator phone/address directories needed to support more efficient and cost-effective surveys of fishing effort. The re-design work will include investments in expert evaluations of possible sampling and estimation improvements, well-designed pilot studies to test those improvements, and phased implementation of improved survey designs that will allow evaluation of possible biases in current and past surveys.

In FY 2010, NMFS' President Budget requests a \$2.8 million increase to support the development of state registration and/or licensing programs that will meet the requirements for development and maintenance of a complete and regularly updated National Registry of marine recreational fishing participants. Approximately 15 states already have licensing or registration programs in place that exempt some participants, however, none of these have registry information management systems that would meet all of the requirements for supporting the use of the National Registry as a sampling frame for more efficient surveys of fishing effort. Six additional states are working to implement registration or licensing programs that would eventually meet the survey requirements. The funding will allow states to develop and maintain registry information management systems that will be compatible with the National Registry system and will deliver updated information on all anglers and for-hire boat operators within the required time frames.

As the re-design of the sampling and estimation methods is completed and the development of the National Registry System progresses, MRIP funding would be allocated to substantially increase sampling levels for the improved telephone surveys of anglers and the improved on-site surveys of angler catches that would comprise the new survey program.

The Agency is required to submit a report to Congress in January 2011 that describes NMFS' efforts to address MSRA requirements specific to recreational fisheries data collection. Improved data collection methods will be implemented by that time, but the increases in sampling levels needed to provide more precise statistics at finer levels of spatiotemporal resolution will not be attainable. With additional funding, NMFS could support the sample sizes needed to support an overall 50% increase in statistical precision of recreational fisheries catch and effort estimates at the levels of spatiotemporal resolution required for current Fishery Management Plan species. This would address the needs of fishery managers who have told us they want catch statistics for smaller geographic areas and shorter time periods so they can manage marine recreational fisheries on a scale closer to that at which they currently manage commercial fisheries.