

MyFishCount 2020

Pilot recreational reporting project enters its third year with upgrades and endorsements



If you see a problem, be part of the solution.

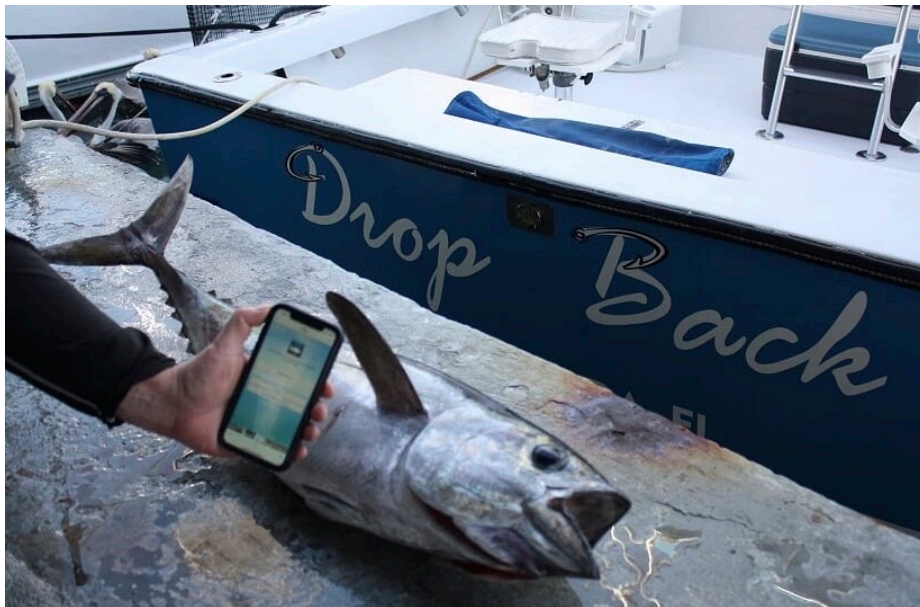
Anglers and fishery managers have at least one thing in common: they both want to ensure access to fisheries while sustaining healthy populations of fish for the future. Reliable and timely information is key to achieving this goal. Unfortunately, fishery managers must often depend on data that are scarce or uncertain. However, anglers can now be part of the solution by providing information about their fishing trips through electronic reporting programs. Electronic reporting can improve the quality of recreational fisheries data, supplement existing monitoring efforts, and is available at the tip of your fingers!

MyFishCount is a pilot project, now in its third year, that allows anglers in the South Atlantic region to submit information about their trips and catches. The project consists of a website and a mobile app created by the Angler Action Foundation and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. “If there is one thing I have learned, it is that nobody can do it alone...not NOAA, not us recreational anglers, not any other management individual or agency,” explained Brett Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the Angler Action Foundation and one of the driving forces behind MyFishCount. “This is something we are going to have to figure out together. MyFishCount is a critical step in that very direction, which makes it one of the single most important projects in modern fishery management.”

Using the MyFishCount Website and Mobile App

Anglers can sign up to participate in the pilot project through the improved website (<https://www.myfishcount.com>), which includes resources on how to use the mobile app, demonstration videos, information on what to report and why, best fishing practices,

reporting tips, and a photo gallery. The MyFishCount website now has a sleeker look and additional functionality. Also, a monthly incentive program was launched through Facebook and Instagram in 2019 to encourage anglers to download the app and start reporting their catch. Incentives include prizes such as fishing apparel donated by program supporters. Recreational anglers are encouraged to report *all species* caught or encountered along the South Atlantic coast. Anglers should log their fishing trips and catches, whether or not fish are caught, since this provides information that may be helpful for managers to better estimate fishing effort.



Jon Reynolds with Dropback Charters and a long-time recreational angler and MyFishCount app user from Islamorada, Florida, puts it this way, "I've learned that good regulations provide healthy fisheries. Good data equals good regulations and MyFishCount is the fastest, simplest way for me to allow my kids to enjoy the amazing fishery that I've always loved."

The MyFishCount mobile app allows anglers to easily participate in the pilot project. To report fishing activity, anglers need to first download the app, register, and create a profile. Once registered, the easy-to-use app allows the user to create a trip log, enter catch information and photos, submit their data, and view past trips. Data are not received by fishery managers until the angler clicks the "submit" button. All information reported through the pilot program is confidential. Users can record a variety of catch information including fish length, photos, depth fished, and release method. The app is accessible from any internet-enabled device. To collect information while fishing offshore out of cellular range, anglers can enter their catch while on the water, and once the angler is back in cellular range, they can submit the trip information and close out the trip report.

Improved Design Based on Angler Feedback



Recreational anglers have played a crucial role in improving the design and efficiency of the app since the pilot began in 2017. For example, a new weather feature brings up the marine forecast (including wind speed and direction, temperature, and tide information) for the user's location and creates a "weather stamp" for the trip once it is submitted. This allows anglers to go back to previous trips and view weather information related to the individual trip. Other notable improvements to the app include a streamlined interface to make logging a trip easier and faster, reminders and prompts for users to complete trips, and more choices on release information. Please keep suggestions coming and look for more improvements in the future!

From charter captains to concerned citizens to major fishing organizations, MyFishCount is turning heads. "In the end, the positives of electronic reporting in improving fishing access and conservation far outweigh the negatives as long as anglers remain in the driver's seat as this concept continues to evolve," says Mike Leonard, Conservation Director of the American Sportfishing Association. "Please do your part to help accurately assess the health of fishery stocks in the South Atlantic and improve future access to the fishery by recording your catch with MyFishCount." With such support, the MyFishCount pilot project is off to a great 2020. Do your part and begin reporting today!

For more information on the MyFishCount pilot project, visit www.myfishcount.com or contact the MyFishCount team at myfishcount@yahoo.com.

