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Office of Science  
and Technology

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Marine  
Recreational  
Information  
Program

# NOAA Fisheries' Fishing Effort Survey Pilot Study and Next Steps

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# FES Pilot Study Key Points

- One of several studies to evaluate potential sources of bias in Fishing Effort Survey.
- Revising order of questions in pilot resulted in **fewer observed reporting errors/illogical responses**.
- Resulting **effort estimates generally 30-40 percent 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**.



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# Switching 2 & 12-month Fishing Activity Questions

FES: SH:PR/2:12

EXP1: SH:PR/2:12

EXP2: PR:SH/2:12

EXP3: PR:SH/12:2

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

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 2018

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 North Carolina?

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 2018

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

**15** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in <<statefull>>?

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 last 12 months

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in <<refperiod2>>

**16** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in <<statefull>>?

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 last 12 months

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in <<refperiod2>>

**15** How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in North Carolina?

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 → Go to question 16

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in November and December of 2019

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months, including November and December

**16** How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in North Carolina?

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

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in November and December of 2019

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months, including November and December

**15** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in North Carolina?

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 → Go to question 16

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater boat fishing in November and December of 2019

**16** How many days did you go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in North Carolina?

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

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months

Number of days saltwater shore fishing in November and December of 2019



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# Follow-up Study

- Revised design administered concurrently with current FES over full course of 2024 (**larger sample size over longer duration**).
- Received funding at end of July 2023 to conduct in 2024.
- New study design is informed by results of two previous pilot studies (one month waves, question order).
- Revised design includes **changing the order of questions and also increasing the administration of the survey** from every two months to monthly.
  - Study will determine **combined effects**, which allows for a more efficient transition/calibration process.
  - **Monthly sampling** is a priority of our partners and will produce **more frequent estimates and a shorter respondent recall** period that may also minimize reporting error.



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# Assessment and Management Implications

- **Full potential impacts unknown** until we've completed follow-up study. Pilot study does not provide a full benchmark for comparison.
- Effort data from FES remains best - and sometimes only - available science for tracking relative year-to-year and long-term effort trends.
- While scaling of the estimates may change if transitioning to a revised survey, we **expect critical catch and effort trend information to remain similar**.
- **Stock status** relatively **consistent** when trend info hasn't changed.
- Focus on **continued conversations with partners and programmatic improvements** to further mitigate disruption to assessment and management in light of continuous survey improvement and future survey design changes.
- Opportunity to make fisheries management more **adaptive**.



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