

TALKING POINTS

Saltwater Angler Registry

CORE IDEA (the big idea)

Create a national phonebook of anglers to account for every person that goes saltwater fishing. Counting sport fishermen provides a more complete picture of who's fishing and leads to smarter management and healthier fisheries.

SUPPORTING IDEAS (still big ideas)

In a rough order of importance:

1. An angler registry moves us down the road to better recreational fishing data in two ways – first it creates a universe of saltwater anglers, essentially a phonebook of fishermen, and second it uses that phone directory to reduce bias and improve the efficiency of catch and effort surveys.
2. Instead of asking a random sample of coastal U.S. residents if they've gone fishing, an angler registry would allow us to target surveys only to those Americans that have identified themselves as fishermen. For example, if you wanted a loaf of bread you wouldn't randomly visit a hardware store or a post office. No, you'd go straight to a grocery store. Likewise, if you want to know how the fishing is, you'd go directly to a fisherman and ask.
3. An angler registry would collect just enough information for us to identify and contact a recreational fisherman about how often he or she goes fishing.
4. NOAA and the coastal states are working together to count their anglers in the most efficient way possible.

PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES

Different groups have different reasons for supporting an angler registry or saltwater license. Here's what each group most wants in a nutshell:

- **Scientists** – Catch and effort data that's more accurate, precise, and timely. In other words, better data and more of it.
- **Managers** – Better information to make better decisions. Confidence that the tough management decisions they must make are supported by rock-solid data.
- **Anglers** – Recognition as a large and influential constituency who is important and must be considered when management decisions are made. Confidence that decisions that affect fishing are based on what's really happening on the water.

TERTIARY POINTS (getting into the details)

1. NOAA must implement a national saltwater angler registry by January 2009, as mandated by Congress.
2. Saltwater anglers who are already licensed by a state that can provide the required contact information to NOAA would not have to sign up with the national registry.
3. Currently no state's program can provide all the necessary information to account for all its anglers. Even those states that have a saltwater fishing license have exemptions (e.g. over aged 65 or under aged 16). We must think creatively about how to capture this information.
4. The registry will cover all anglers that fish in federal waters or fish for anadromous species like striped bass or salmon. In other words, even anglers in non-coastal states like Idaho or Pennsylvania would have to register to fish for salmon or striped bass. The Great Lakes would not be subject to the registry.
5. NOAA is not allowed to collect fees until 2011, at which time NOAA will likely do so. There is no fee structure in place yet for the national registry, but similar federal fees (e.g. HMS permit) range from \$25-35.
6. Any fees collected as part of the national registry will revert to the National Treasury. In other words, the money is much more likely to go into building highways or sewer systems than into building fisheries.
7. A person should only have to register once, and the registration will be valid anywhere in the US. The registrant will also be required to abide by state fishing license requirements where they choose to fish.
8. We will be using a variety of methods to register anglers with the goal of making the registration process as easy as possible. Options will include over the internet, through bait and tackle shops, through state agencies, and directly from NMFS.
9. It will take several years to ramp up once the registry is implemented, as more people register. We will probably have to run our existing random digit dialing surveys and the new system side-by-side until we get a sufficient number of registrants sign on.
10. The federal government will work with the states to enforce the national registration.