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**SPOTTED SEATROUT IS TOP CATCH AMONG SALTWATER RECREATIONAL ANGLERS
FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW**

Marine recreational anglers caught more than 37 million spotted seatrout in 2006, according to new data included in "Fisheries of the United States – 2006", a report issued this week by NOAA Fisheries Service.

Spotted seatrout was the most popular catch among marine recreational anglers in the Gulf of Mexico. The top catches in other regions were striped bass (North Atlantic), summer flounder (Mid-Atlantic), spot (South Atlantic), chub mackerel (Pacific), black rockfish (Pacific Northwest), and yellowstripe goatfish (Western Pacific).

The same 2007 NOAA Fisheries Service report showed the 2006 catch of 475 million fish was up 11 percent over last year and marked the highest recreational catch total in the last ten years. Overall harvest levels also increased, nosing up 18 percent to nearly 214 million fish. While anglers are keeping about 20 percent more fish than a decade ago, they are also releasing their catch more often. Of the 475 million fish caught by anglers in 2006, 262 million (55 percent) were released alive.

Recreational fishing continues to be one of the most popular outdoor sports. In 2006, more than 13 million Americans fished along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts, roughly the same number as 2005. These anglers took 89 million saltwater trips in 2006, a 5 percent increase over the previous year.

The statistics are compiled by NOAA Fisheries Service from in-person and telephone interviews with recreational fishermen. Currently, the agency is engaged in a joint state-federal initiative to better answer the questions of who fishes, where anglers fish, and what they catch. This team of scientists, managers, and fishermen are working on new ways to get data collection more in sync with today's management needs. Having good quality data leads to confident decision-making about how best to conserve marine ecosystems for future generations.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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NOAA Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov
Fisheries of the United States, 2006: TBA