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NOAA05-142
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 29, 2005

SPOTTED SEATROUT TOPS U.S. SALTWATER RECREATIONAL CATCHES

Marine recreational anglers caught more than 33 million spotted seatrout in 2004, according to new data included in "Fisheries of the United States - 2004," a report issued last week by NOAA Fisheries Service.

Seatrout was the most popular catch for anglers in the Gulf of Mexico. The top catches in other regions were scup (northeast), Atlantic croaker (mid-atlantic), spot (southeast), and barred sandbass (pacific). Summer flounder, striped bass, bluefish and red drum were also popular targets of U.S. anglers.

The report also shows that recreational catches grew by 18 percent between 1995 and 2004, resulting in both higher landings and more catch-and-release fishing than a decade ago. Of the 10 most popular recreational species, the majority of fish, 60 percent on average, are released alive.

The report finds that recreational fishing continues to be one of the most popular outdoor sports in the United States. It supported nearly 350,000 jobs and contributed \$30.5 billion to the national economy.

Anglers took nearly 74 million saltwater trips in 2004, roughly the same as 2003. Participation in marine recreational fishing grew a modest three percent from the previous year. Between 1995 and 2004, the number of anglers grew 15 percent and the number of trips increased by 11 percent. These figures are based on the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey.

"Fisheries of the United States" is available on the NOAA Fisheries Statistics Web site: www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/fus/fus04/index.html or by contacting the Recreational Fisheries Services Branch in the Office of Constituent Services at forbes.darby@noaa.gov or (301) 713-9501.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and 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 and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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