

CORRESPONDENCE



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492
Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

April 22, 2026

Mr. Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fishery Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Re: Using electronic jigging machines as a novel, ultra-low impact gear type to collect catch data and biological samples in the Gulf of Maine Groundfish Closure Areas EFP.

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) has reviewed the exempted fishing permit (EFP) application submitted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) entitled 'Using electronic jigging machines as a novel, ultra-low impact gear type to collect catch data and biological samples in the Gulf of Maine Groundfish Closure Areas.' The Council has no objection to the issuance of this EFP.

The Council supports the project objectives, particularly the collection of data on Atlantic pollock to address important research priorities identified in recent stock assessments. The Council also supports the opportunistic collection of Atlantic cod biological samples to contribute to the ongoing cod DNA study, recognizing the value of expanding the spatial coverage of these data through minimally invasive sampling methods.

Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cate O'Keefe". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Cate O'Keefe
Executive Director



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492
Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

April 23, 2026

Mr. Michael Pentony
GARFO Regional Administrator
NMFS/NOAA Fisheries
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Mike:

Today, my staff electronically sent the final submission of Framework Adjustment 72 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan, including the Supplemental Information Report and appendices, to your staff in the Sustainable Fisheries Division.

After reviewing the letter and comments dated April 15, 2026, on the preliminary submission sent on March 3, 2026, we updated the framework document and appendices to incorporate all the changes requested. My staff appreciates the guidance and support provided by GARFO staff on NEPA compliance.

Sincerely,

Cate O'Keefe
Executive Director

From: NOAA Fisheries <noaafisheries@public.govdelivery.com>

Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 1:50 PM

To: Cate O'Keefe <cokeefe@nefmc.org>

Subject: NOAA Fisheries' Recreational Fishing Data Partnership Updates - Spring 2026

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

NEWSCAST

Spring 2026

Recreational Fishing Data Partnership Roundup



National Updates

Fishing Effort Survey

In January, we began implementing the improved [Fishing Effort Survey](#) according to existing [regional survey administration schedules](#). The new FES should increase the accuracy of recreational effort estimates by mitigating potential overreporting of fishing trips.

This follows [extensive testing](#) and a favorable [independent peer review](#) that indicates the new design offers improved utility for stock assessments and management decisions.

This summer (targeting August), we will publish the calibrated historical estimates (1981 - 2025), which have been rescaled to the improved design using the updated [peer-reviewed calibration model](#). As these calibrated estimates are published, we will continue to coordinate closely with all relevant Councils and Commissions to effectively manage the transition. We recognize the critical importance of having the updated data available for upcoming management decisions and stock assessment schedules. Our team is working diligently to complete this calibration work as quickly as possible.

The regular submission and associated public comment period for the FES information collection request per the Office of Management and Budget's Paperwork Reduction Act requirement was [published in the Federal Register](#) April 2, 2026. The comment period ends June 1, 2026. The intent of the notice is to help assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. This information collection request includes the current transition from bi-monthly to monthly administration of the FES.

Anticipated Estimate Publication Schedule

- Final 2025 estimates (not yet calibrated to reflect the [improved 2026 Fishing Effort Survey design](#)) - targeting May
- Final calibrated 2025 estimates and availability of the revised historical time series from 1981 - 2025 (calibrated to reflect the improved Fishing Effort Survey design) - targeting August
- Preliminary 2026 estimates - targeting late summer; as soon as possible following production and publishing of the calibrated time series

Please note that this schedule is contingent upon maintaining existing resource capacity and having no unexpected disruptions.

Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive

Agency leadership announced RAPID in early 2026. RAPID is a priority initiative to transform how recreational fishing data is collected in the United States. It aims to modernize the recreational data collection enterprise by increasing data collection capabilities and strengthening state data streams and regional partnerships to improve data precision, accessibility, and trust.

We distributed the re-envisioning framework report to partners in March. This report compiles regional feedback from partners and the public through 15+ listening sessions held in 2024 and 2025 as part of our previous re-envisioning initiative. It will help serve

as a foundational building block for discussions at regional RAPID workshops this summer and fall.

The agency is backing this RAPID transition with an additional ~\$2.5 million to increase state sampling efforts - the first major influx of recreational data funding since 2020. This funding will go through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission to enhance existing survey sampling to improve the precision of estimates.

National Academies Peer Review of NOAA Fisheries' Survey and Data Standards

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine completed their [peer review](#) (see also a summarized ["highlights" report](#)) of the [agency's survey and data standards](#).

The standards are intended to support the program's commitment to transparency; promote data quality, consistency, and comparability across [data collection programs](#); facilitate the shared use of the statistics these programs produce; and ensure the scientific integrity of the data collection efforts and the quality of the recreational fisheries statistics.

The National Academies briefed partners and the public of their findings and recommendations via a [webinar held March 10 \(click to view recording\)](#).

We are currently drafting a plan to address the panel's recommendations.

View more info [here, including high-level findings and recommendations](#).

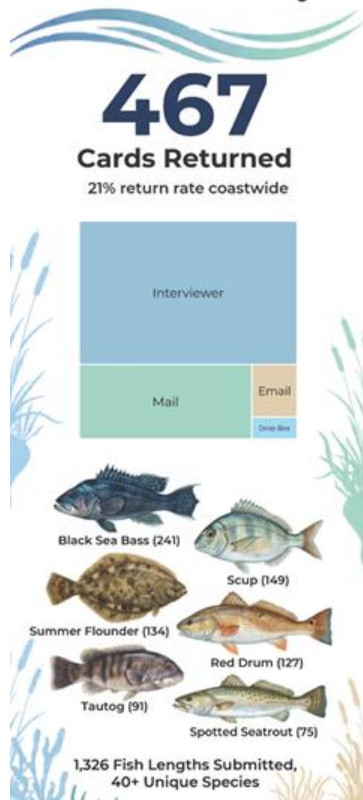


Atlantic Coast Updates

[Recreational Anglers Participate in Atlantic Coast Catch Card Pilot Project](#)

In 2025, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Recreational Technical Committee launched a pilot project across eight Atlantic coast states to test a new way of collecting discard information.

Catch Card Returns & Data Summary



On average, recreational anglers release a large portion of what they catch, but those discards are difficult to fully capture with traditional data collection methods. To help fill those gaps, the project gathered additional information directly from anglers about what they're seeing on the water. Since discard data plays an important role in stock assessments and ultimately the management decisions that shape fishing regulations, this effort also gave anglers a more direct role in contributing to the science behind fisheries management. Catch Card Pilot assignments were conducted in accordance with the NOAA Fisheries' Access Point Angler Intercept Survey design.

One of the central questions behind this project was whether recording discards during the trip, rather than trying to recall them after the fact, would improve data accuracy. Results from the pilot offer encouraging early evidence that pre-trip notification may help anglers record species, quantity, and even specific lengths of fish.

The pilot is continuing in 2026. View more info [here](#) (page 7).

Gulf Coast Updates

The [Gulf of America Fisheries Information Network](#) (GulfFIN) and NOAA Fisheries released an updated [GulfFIN Regional Implementation Plan](#). This plan guides the allocation of agency and partner resources, including funding and research. These resources will address the recreational fishing data needs and priorities over the next several years for stock assessors and fisheries managers in the Gulf of America.



NOAA Fisheries uses these [regional implementation plans](#) to develop a national inventory of partner needs and associated costs and to inform decision-making for ongoing NOAA Fisheries' research priorities and budget allocation. These plans are

living documents and adjusted at least every 5 years, or as necessary, based on changing science, emerging management needs, and budget availability.

[NOAA Fisheries Certifies Two State Recreational Fishing Surveys to Improve Catch Estimates](#)

NOAA Fisheries has [certified Alabama's and Mississippi's creel surveys](#) as part of a move to advance federal-state partnerships for recreational fisheries management strategies. These surveys aim to produce more timely and precise estimates of state-specific recreational fishing catch and trip activity. This certification marks a significant milestone in the initiatives NOAA is undertaking to improve recreational fishing data.

Certification means [AL Creel](#) and [MS Creel](#) were found to be statistically valid approaches to provide key recreational fishing statistics. Both surveys are now eligible to receive NOAA Fisheries' funding as it becomes available.

Read the story [here](#).

State Survey Sampler Spotlight



Meet Anna Bellerive, Access Point Angler Intercept Survey interviewer with the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

APAIS is one of NOAA Fisheries' recreational fishing surveys. It gathers catch-per-trip information from anglers as they complete their fishing trips. The survey is conducted by specially trained state survey samplers at marinas, boat ramps, beaches, piers, and other public fishing access sites.

- **Time as an APAIS interviewer**
 - Anna has been an APAIS survey interviewer since 2021, starting as a seasonal employee with Connecticut DEEP
- **Educational background**

- She received her degree in Biology from Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore; she then received her master's degree in Molecular and Cell Biology from Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut
- **Favorite fishing activity and why**
 - Just being out on the water, spending time with family and friends
- **What I like most about my job**
 - "I like that my job is making a difference, contributing to sustainable fishing populations and making sure there are enough fish for the future. I also get to catch up with some marina owners, and see what people are up to and how they're doing on the water."
- **Clearing up common misconceptions**
 - Biggest misconception is that we're trying to limit fishing for recreational anglers
 - We have the same goals. We want great fishing for everyone for years to come

NOAA Fisheries Releases Several Flagship Reports

NOAA Fisheries released 2023 editions of [Fisheries of the United States](#) and [Fisheries Economics of the United States](#). These reports provide detailed information on commercial landings, recreational catch, trade, and economic impacts.

In 2023, anglers took more than 204 million saltwater fishing trips to enjoy fishing along U.S. coastlines. Anglers caught an estimated 1.1 billion fish and released 65 percent of their catch.

Recreational fishing remains an important part of the U.S. tourism sector and coastal economies, supporting 694,000 jobs and generating \$145 billion in sales impacts.

In addition, the [2023 Status of Stocks](#) indicates 50 stocks have been rebuilt since 2000.

NOAA Fisheries also released an [updated National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy](#) that guides the agency's approach to recreational fisheries and affirms our commitment to sustainable and accessible recreational fisheries for the benefit of the nation. To advance the Policy ahead of the 2027 National Saltwater Recreational

Fisheries Summit, NOAA has identified a set of [interim commitments](#), including RAPID, which support recreational fisheries.

In the News

- [50 Years of Innovation and Leadership: Celebrating the Magnuson-Stevens Act](#)
 - *The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is the primary law that governs marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters. First passed in 1976, the MSA fosters the long-term biological and economic sustainability of marine fisheries. NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator Eugenio Piñeiro Soler reflects on the legacy and the future impact of the Act.*
- [Recreational Anglers Help Boost Bluefin Tuna Research](#)

Upcoming Key Meetings

- **April 28, 2026** - Pacific Coast [RecFIN Technical Committee Meeting](#) (virtual). Dr. Katherine Papacostas, NOAA Fisheries, Fisheries Statistics Division, Recreational Statistics Program Management Branch director, will provide an update on RAPID, the National Academies' review of the agency's Survey and Data Standards, and state partner survey certification status.
- **April 28-29, 2026** - NOAA Fisheries - National State Agency Directors Meeting, New Orleans. Dr. Evan Howell, NOAA Fisheries Deputy Assistant Administrator for Scientific Programs, will provide an update on RAPID.
- **May 19-21, 2026** - [Council Coordination Committee Meeting](#), Homer, Alaska. Dr. Howell will provide an update on RAPID.
- **May 27-28, 2026** - [Northeast Region Coordinating Council Meeting](#), Providence, Rhode Island. Tim Sartwell, special advisor to the Deputy Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, will provide a virtual update on RAPID, and John Foster, NOAA Fisheries, Fisheries Statistics Division, supervisory survey statistician, will provide a virtual update on the Fishing Effort Survey and other MRIP programmatic milestones.
- **June 8-12, 2026** - [South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting](#), St. Augustine, Florida. Dr. Richard Cody, NOAA Fisheries, Fisheries Statistics

Division director, will provide an update June 9 on the FES and other MRIP programmatic milestones.

Key Resources

- [MRIP Outreach and Education Materials](#)
- [Fishing Effort Survey Research and Improvements](#)
- [MRIP Data User Handbook](#)
- [MRIP Survey Design and Statistical Methods Manual](#)
- [Info and Q&As on the Estimate Review Process](#)
- [MRIP Data Query Tool \(access to the recreational fishing microdata and estimates\)](#)
- [MRIP Data Updates Email Subscription](#)
- [Recreational Fishing Data Glossary](#)
- [Public Fishing Access Site Register](#)
- [National Saltwater Angler Registry](#)
- [Annual Survey Reports](#)
- [NOAA Fisheries Survey and Data Standards](#)
- [Transitioning to New or Improved Survey Designs](#)

About the Recreational Fishing Data Collection Partnership

This state-regional-federal partnership is responsible for developing, implementing, and improving surveys that measure how many trips saltwater anglers take and how many fish they catch. Combined with information from commercial, biological, and observer data, this recreational fishing data informs stock assessments and management decisions that aim to achieve sustainable fisheries for future generations.

Do you have a question about recreational fishing data collection or estimation? Email fisheries.mrip@noaa.gov or visit our [Recreational Fishing Data web page](#).