



Connie Barclay
301-427-8029
Kate Brogan
301-427-8030

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 5, 2015

**STATEMENT FROM RICHARD MERRICK, NOAA FISHERIES
CHIEF SCIENCE ADVISOR AND DIRECTOR, SCIENCE PROGRAMS**

NOAA kicks off updating the recreational fishing effort survey

NOAA Fisheries announced today it will transition from a telephone survey to a mail survey to gather data on fishing trips (effort) of Atlantic and Gulf Coast saltwater recreational anglers.

During 2015-2017, NOAA will conduct both surveys together to calibrate new mail survey results with historic phone survey effort data. NOAA Fisheries will not use the new data in fishery management decisions until 2018. We will continue to work with our partners throughout the three-year period to ensure a smooth and efficient transition.

The Transition Team includes experts from state agencies, Regional Fishery Management Councils, Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, and NOAA Fisheries. Members of the team provided input into the process for calibrating the new estimates to the historical time series and will create a framework for updating stock assessments and catch limits which is respectful of regional decision-making,

The major change during the transition will involve switching from our current Coastal Household Telephone Survey to a more comprehensive mail survey. Mail surveys do a better job of measuring recreational fishing trips by reaching a broader population (including households without landline telephones), collecting more accurate information from respondents and delivering higher response rates.

Last fall NOAA Fisheries concluded a multi-year Marine Recreational Information Program pilot project in Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, and Florida. The pilot project results indicated that more people report fishing in the mail survey than the telephone survey. This means that fishing effort is most likely greater than previously estimated. Our revised estimates reflect improvements in our ability to measure fishing effort, but do not necessarily show an actual change in fishing activity.

The current phone survey will be used to provide recreational fishing effort information for the Atlantic and Gulf coasts for science and management decision-making through 2017. When the calibration between the two surveys is complete, we will drop the phone survey and use only the mail survey for estimates of fishing trips. Stock assessments will then be updated to use the mail survey results and the recalibrated phone survey data. These new tools will be used to manage recreational fisheries.