

**Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational  
Fishing License Program**

**Annual Report**

**Fiscal Year 2017**

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## **I. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to fulfill the requirements set forth by Section 20-2.2-10 of the Rhode Island General Laws. In accordance therewith, this report provides an overview of the Recreational Saltwater License Program for Rhode Island for FY17, offers a brief review of the status of state-based recreational fishing assessments, and sets forth the FY18 programmatic budget.

## **II. Overview of License Program**

### **a. Background**

The State of Rhode Island enacted legislation in January 2010 establishing a new Recreational Saltwater License Program for Rhode Island. The program has two primary purposes:

1) It provides a state-based alternative to federal saltwater angler registry requirements, which are administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) pursuant to the 2006 Amendments to the federal Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act (section 401(g)) (hereinafter referred to as the “Magnuson Act Amendments”).

2) It provides a source of state funding for programs and activities that benefit marine recreational fishing interests in Rhode Island.

The Magnuson Act Amendments mandate the establishment of a national registry program for all saltwater anglers, for use in conducting more accurate marine recreational fisheries statistical surveys; those surveys serve as the backbone of marine fisheries management programs for the recreational fishing sector. In December 2008, NMFS promulgated the final rule creating the registry, and also established an option for states to develop their own state-based licensing programs as an alternative, provided that the state programs meet federal criteria.

The RI license fees -- \$7/year for residents (under age 65), \$10/year for non-residents, and \$5 for a 7-day license – are designed to both cover the administrative costs of the license program and provide additional support to programs and activities that serve the needs and interests of saltwater recreational fishermen in Rhode Island.

The statute establishing RI’s Recreational Saltwater License Program – RIGL Chapter 20-2.2 – was shaped and supported by a Recreational Marine License Study Group, co-chaired by the R.I. Department of Environmental Management (hereinafter, the “Department”) and the R.I. Saltwater Anglers’ Association. The group included representatives from a variety of recreational fishing groups and interests from Rhode Island.

The statute includes a section titled *Accountability and oversight* (RIGL Section 20-2.2-10). Pursuant to that section, the Department is charged with preparing an annual report that details the number of recreational saltwater licenses issued, the total amount of license fee revenue received, the expenditures made during the prior year from the license fee account, and how the Department plans to allocate and use the fee revenue during the next year. The report is also slated to include any additional, relevant information relating to the administration and enforcement of the licensing program, and the status of state-based recreational fishing assessments and stock assessments.

The statute calls upon the Department to submit the report to the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council, and for the Department and Council to then conduct one or more public meetings to solicit input from recreational fishermen and the general public. The Council is then tasked with preparing an addendum to the report, setting forth its opinion on whether the licensing program is meeting its intended purpose, and offering any recommendations for modifying the program. The report and addendum are then to be submitted to the Rhode Island General Assembly.

## **b. Status**

The Department's Division of Fish & Wildlife, Marine Fisheries Program (hereinafter, the "Division") developed the RI recreational saltwater license program early in 2010, and the program officially took effect on April 15, 2010.

As established by the statute, anyone wishing to recreationally fish or spearfish in the marine waters of Rhode Island must possess either a RI state fishing license, a state fishing license from a reciprocal state, or a federal registration. The requirement solely pertains to those harvesting, or attempting to harvest, finfish for non-commercial purposes. In 2012, regulations were amended to have the requirements also include those harvesting, or attempting to harvest, squid. Exemptions are provided for the following categories:

- Children under 16,
- Anglers fishing on licensed party or charter boats,
- RI residents who are blind or permanently disabled, and
- RI residents who are on leave from active military duty.

RI residents over the age of 65, and active military personnel stationed in RI, are eligible to obtain RI state licenses at no cost.

The new federal registry requirements also pertain to for-hire vessels, requiring that they either register federally or be subject to state-based licensing. Pursuant to a previously enacted state statute – RIGL section 20-2-27.1 – Rhode Island requires for-hire vessels (charter and party boats carrying recreational fishermen) to obtain a RI party and charter boat license.

In the summer of 2010, the Division submitted the new RI recreational saltwater fishing license program, and the existing RI party and charter boat license program, to

NMFS for review. On October 25, 2010, NMFS and the Division entered into an MOU, pursuant to which the Division agreed to regularly collect and transmit to NMFS the contact information generated by the two programs.

On the basis of NMFS' review and approval of the RI license programs, and the commitments set forth in the MOU, the State of Rhode Island was officially designated as an exempted state for all anglers, spear fishers, and for-hire fishing vessels on November 8, 2010 – enabling the RI recreational saltwater fishing license program, and the RI party and charter boat license program, to serve as a valid, legal substitutes for the federal registry.

During 2010, a federal registration was available at no cost. Beginning in 2011, NMFS enacted a \$15 annual fee for the federal registration. The annual cost has since increased to \$29.

Because the federal registration did not have a fee during 2010, it was difficult to assess the metrics of the RI program during its inaugural year. Since 2011, the program has equilibrated, providing more predictable participation and revenue rates. The average number of licenses issued between 2011 - 2015 was approximately 42,000 per year, generating average revenues of about \$270,000 gross and \$180,000 net. For the last two years (2016 and 2017) this figure has risen to approximately 47,000 licenses issued per year generating average revenues of about \$300,000 gross and \$200,000 net. All net license fee revenues, those not retained by the program vendor, are deposited into a restricted receipt account.

### **c. Benefits**

The overarching benefits of recreational license programs are their potential for improving recreational fishing management by:

- Allowing flexibility in the administration of the recreational license program to suit the needs of Rhode Island.
- Improving the quality and accuracy of marine recreational fishing data; and
- Providing an improved means for quantifying the scope of recreational saltwater fishing and spearfishing in Rhode Island, and throughout the U.S.

A key benefit of having the State of Rhode Island administer its own license program is the opportunity to make the license available at a lower cost than a federal registration. The \$7 (resident) and \$10 (non-resident) fees for the RI license compare favorably to the \$29 fee for the federal registration. Moreover, RI does not require state residents over the age of 65, or any active military personnel stationed in RI, to pay a fee for a license. RI offers a 7-day license at a reduced rate of \$5, available to both residents and nonresidents.

An additional benefit of having RI administer its own program is that the State program offers certain exemptions that are not available under the federal program – namely, exemptions for RI residents who are blind or permanently disabled, and RI residents who are on leave from active military duty.

Another benefit of having a RI state program is reciprocity with neighboring states and federal waters. Pursuant to Rhode Island’s licensing statute, Rhode Island will extend reciprocity to any other state that offers reciprocity to Rhode Island. Any resident from a reciprocal state who is licensed by that state can fish in RI waters without having to obtain a RI license, provided that a RI resident with a RI license can fish in the waters of the reciprocal state without having to obtain a license from that state. The states currently covered by a reciprocity agreement with Rhode Island are: New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine.

A portion of each Rhode Island license sold, \$2 for every license sold online, and \$3 for every license sold via a vendor, is used to cover the costs of administering the licensing program. This money goes directly to the vendors who administer the program, and are not revenues received by the state. In this way, the program covers its own costs and is self-sustaining.

The balance of the revenues derived from license sales are deposited into a restricted receipt account, which is managed by the Department and subject to the exclusive-use restrictions set forth by statute. Monies from the account may only be used for: managing Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries, with particular reference to improving State-based recreational fishery catch and effort statistics and stock assessments; and enhancing recreational fishing opportunities in the State. The availability of this dedicated revenue source for use in supporting programs and activities that address the priority interests of RI’s recreational fishing community is a major benefit associated with the RI license program. Of particular value is the opportunity to use the state funds to leverage federal funds.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Sport Fish Restoration Program provides federal funding for saltwater recreational fishing programs. The funding is administered via grants to the State; projects written into these grants require a 25% state match. The fees generated by the RI saltwater license program are used to leverage an additional \$3 for every \$1 dedicated to projects and activities that enhance recreational saltwater fishing access, as well as science and management programs that relate directly to recreational fish stocks. It is the policy of the Division to only fund Saltwater Fishing License Fee projects which have been matched with USFWS grants unless absolutely necessary.

#### **d. Implementation**

##### ***Internet Based System & Local Vendors***

Section 20-2.2-7 of the statute establishing the license program authorizes and directs the Department to engage the contractual services of a state-approved vendor to develop and implement a web-based system that serves as a portal to obtain licenses. The system developed by the vendor is used directly by recreational fishermen and by authorized licensing agents.

During the initial program development stage, the Department entered into a formal agreement with Rhode Island Interactive (RII), which administers the Rhode Island state government web portal, known as RI.gov. Pursuant to the agreement, RII is responsible for developing and implementing the internet-based licensing system. RII followed through by developing and implementing a system that serves as the mechanism for issuing licenses, and for collecting all of the required contact information at the point of sale for the national registry.

The internet-based system is used by authorized vendors to provide a point of sale alternative for anglers and spear fishers to acquire a license. These vendors include bait and tackle shops, marinas and big box stores. To date, there are twenty-five (25) authorized vendors. RII is responsible for handling the business arrangements with each vendor, including billing, remittance and technical support. Vendors must pay an annual fee of \$75 to RII to cover these service costs.

To cover the overall costs of administering the web-based license program, RII retains \$2 for each license sold via the internet. If a license is sold by a vendor, RII retains \$1 and the vendor retains \$2. Neither RII nor the vendors receive any compensation for no-fee licenses issued to RI residents over the age of 65 or active military personnel stationed in RI.

RII provides all angler contact information (name, address, phone number, date of birth – and if provided, email address) to the Division monthly via electronic transfer. The confidentiality of the data is protected via the use of encryption. The Division, in turn, provides the encrypted data to the NMFS MRIP program for incorporation into the national registry.

##### ***Information & Outreach***

Since the rollout of the Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License, the Division has continued to provide information and outreach to the Rhode Island angling community. The primary vehicle is the webpage, [www.saltwater.ri.gov](http://www.saltwater.ri.gov), which provides direct access to the licensing portal. The page includes a detailed FAQ section, covering all aspects of the license program, a link to all authorized license vendors, links to recreational fishing regulations, the locations of all public boat ramps that provide access

to marine waters in Rhode Island, and other information pertinent to recreational saltwater fishing.

Since 2013, the Division has contracted with a publishing company to create a recreational fishing guide for distribution throughout the state. The guide provides information on a variety of recreational-fishing-related issues, including current recreational fishing regulations, information on local fishing and boating access sites, and commonly caught species. It also provides information on the license program. The guide has emerged as a popular, widely circulated annual publication that serves to both promote recreational saltwater fishing in RI and inform the angling community on saltwater license revenue supported programs and regulations.

The Division continues to issue periodic press releases regarding the license program and produce fact sheets, informational cards and brochures for dissemination at public events, such as the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) annual New England Saltwater Fishing Show. The Division continues to man a booth at the show to answer questions about recreational fishing, and to support issuing licenses in a convenient forum for the community. The show offers an ideal opportunity to interact directly with the recreational fishing community. Per the suggestion of our recreational saltwater license study group, the Division will provide more frequent updates to the RISAA and other interested parties on projects funded by recreational license funds. For example, the Division will report any boat ramp repairs or construction updates to RISAA to disseminate to their members. Another valuable suggestion generated by the group was to communicate any maintenance / infrastructure via press releases. The group feels that it is important to increase public awareness of how the recreational saltwater license funds are being spent. Tangible results increase the positive perception of the program. To that end the Division will also highlight these projects in its annual magazine. The group also suggested more communication between the Division and the angling public to direct where access point maintenance is needed.

To help increase awareness regarding the license program in the field, the Division also continues to maintain weatherproof vinyl signs at fishing access points throughout RI. The signs feature an illustration of the license and clear text informing the public that the license is required and how it can be acquired. RI also continues to provide informational signs to vendors to advertise the availability of licenses at their places of business.

For the FY2017 funding cycle the Division started funding an annual youth fishing camp administered by the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) with oversight from the Division. The camp was a success enrolling 51 children for three days all centered around fishing. The popularity of the camp has prompted the Division and RISAA to continue the camp in FY2018, at Rocky Point. RISAA is a very active, large recreational fishing organization based in the state of Rhode Island. An overview of the association can be found on their website: [www.risaa.org](http://www.risaa.org). The state funding used to match the federal USFWS sportfish grant was derived almost entirely from credits derived from the donated time spent by the RISAA volunteers. The grant the volunteer



time was matched to was the USFWS RI Aquatic Education grant. Future camps will continue to leverage volunteer hours to match federal funding. In the event that source of match comes up short, recreational saltwater license revue will be used to match the shortfall.

### ***Free Fishing Day***

In accordance with the statutory allowance for one free fishing day a year, during which all license requirements are waived, the DEM Director continues to declare a free fishing day each summer. Since 2010, the free fishing day has coincided with Governor's Bay Day.

#### **e. Licenses Issued, Revenues Received: Fiscal Years 2011-2017**

Tables 1-3 summarize licenses issued and revenue generated since the inception of the license program. For the purposes of this report gross revenue is the total amount of fees paid to RIDEM for the saltwater recreational license. Net revenue is the balance of fees deposited into the restricted account after the administrative costs are paid to the internet portal contractor and other brick and mortar vendors. License numbers and revenues increased after FY11, as expected, as the federal registry switched from being a free alternative to being a more costly alternative. In the five years since FY11, license issued have plateaued at approximately 42,000 per year, generating an average gross revenue of about \$270,000, and average net revenue of about \$186,000. The number of licenses sold and revenue generated fall well short of initial predictions, resulting in a much more constrained budget then originally envisioned. FY17 continued the upward trend of FY16 with increased license sales above the recent average. During FY17 46,946 licenses were issued resulting in \$300,910 in gross revenue and \$207,631 in net revenue.

Table 1. RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses – Number Issued: FY11 through FY17

<b>License Type</b>	<b>FY11</b>	<b>FY12</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
Resident Full Year	18,658	26,556	25,864	25,938	26,084	29,335	28,605
Non-Resident Full Year	5,249	7,649	6,975	7,432	7,381	8,428	8,378
Resident 7-Day	60	122	107	144	134	159	158
Non-Resident 7 Day	1,310	2,505	2,730	2,958	3,055	3,141	3,221
Resident Over 65	3,635	4,613	4,653	4,667	4,704	5,078	5,613
Active Military Stationed in RI	703	993	996	1,055	992	1,006	971
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>29,615</b>	<b>42,438</b>	<b>41,325</b>	<b>42,194</b>	<b>42,350</b>	<b>47,147</b>	<b>46,946</b>

Table 2. RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses -- Gross Revenue: FY11 through FY17

<b>License Type</b>	<b>FY11</b>	<b>FY12</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
Resident Full Year	\$130,606	\$185,892	\$181,048	\$181,566	\$182,588	\$205,345	\$200,235
Non-Resident Full Year	\$52,490	\$76,490	\$69,750	\$74,320	\$73,810	\$84,280	\$83,780
Resident 7-Day	\$300	\$610	\$535	\$720	\$670	\$795	\$790
Non-Resident 7 Day	\$6,550	\$12,525	\$13,650	\$14,790	\$15,275	\$15,705	\$16,105
Resident Over 65	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Active Military Stationed in RI	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$189,946</b>	<b>\$275,517</b>	<b>\$264,983</b>	<b>\$271,396</b>	<b>\$272,343</b>	<b>\$306,125</b>	<b>\$300,910</b>

Table 3. RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses -- Net Revenue: FY11 through FY17

<b>License Type</b>	<b>FY11</b>	<b>FY12</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
Resident Full Year	\$88,462	\$124,413	\$120,880	\$120,736	\$121,175	\$136,810	\$133,772
Non-Resident Full Year	\$40,702	\$58,566	\$53,340	\$56,970	\$56,682	\$64,923	\$64,664
Resident 7-Day	\$174	\$352	\$304	\$411	\$382	\$453	\$430
Non-Resident 7 Day	\$3,605	\$6,528	\$6,988	\$7,794	\$8,085	\$8,445	\$8,765
Resident Over 65	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Active Military Stationed in RI	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$132,943</b>	<b>\$189,859</b>	<b>\$181,512</b>	<b>\$185,911</b>	<b>\$186,324</b>	<b>\$210,631</b>	<b>\$207,631</b>

### **III. Status of State-Based Fishing Assessments**

Rhode Island's recreational catch and effort data is collected via the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). MRIP is designed to improve recreational data collection by using the data generated from license sales to create a national recreational angler registry and by employing new angler survey protocols. This registry of licensees is a known sampling frame that can be drawn upon to conduct more focused surveys. Addresses taken from the registry are used to assess fishing effort, i.e., the number of anglers and the number of trips they make in Rhode Island. Catch data is collected by intercept interviews with anglers at fishing access sites. This catch data is used to calculate the number, species, and size of the fish being caught by recreational anglers in Rhode Island. Data from the two independent surveys is combined to produce regional and coast wide estimates of recreational harvest. Results are reported in two-month periods called waves. This data is collected during the months of March through December; no recreational data is collected in Rhode Island during wave 1 (January - February) due to low fishing activity.

The portion of MRIP that collects recreational fishing effort data is currently being collected by the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) and the mail based Fishing Effort Survey (FES). The dual data collection methodology is in the end stage of a transition from a phone to a mail based survey. Both methodologies use information provided by anglers when purchasing a Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License as the sample frame for the surveys. ICF International is the federally approved contractor that currently conducts the effort survey. Throughout the year, the data collected by the contractor is presented to the Division for review; once approved by the Division, the data is provided to MRIP. The results of the CHTS are displayed, by calendar year, in Tables 4 - 6 respectively. Note that the data is presented by calendar year, not fiscal year, and that 2017 phone data is only for waves 2-5.

The effort data presented in these tables was collected by the random telephone surveys to households in coastal communities (CHTS) method. This methodology has fallen short in recent years of meeting sampling metrics; successful interview rates have been dropping over the past four years, despite large increases in sample size. This trend is a main driving force behind the planned switch to an alternative mail-based methodology, the FES. MRIP has completed pilot research projects in several states evaluating the FES methodology. Preliminary results show that the response rates are higher and survey answers are more comprehensive using this methodology. The program is expected to fully transition in 2018.

The second portion MRIP focuses on the collection of recreational catch statistics. As of 2016, the Division is responsible for conduct of the Access Point Angler Interview Survey (APAIS). Prior to that, the Division had a contract with the federally approved contractor, to perform the APAIS. APAIS is the portion of MRIP which captures the recreational catch data. The accuracy of the data collected via angler intercepts has been improving over the past three years, due to the new approaches employed under MRIP.

The number of attempted interviews is increasing, as is the spatial and temporal distribution of the interviews. A more comprehensive sampling frame of potential sampling locations with accompanying site pressures is being used to better distribute the interviews. Better statistical sample distribution is expected to continue to increase the accuracy of the estimates. Additionally, interviews are now being conducted at night and at increasing rates during the winter months. Intercept refusal rates have remained level, despite the change to the Division conducting the APAIS. The Division is working hard to improve this aspect of the processes and engaged stakeholders at local club events to foster buy in to the APAIS. This face to face approach has been well received and will continue into the future. The Division has also reached out to NOAA Fisheries for outreach materials and strategies which should have positive results.

To further add to the above-described improvements, the Division is increasing the number of sample draws across all months using revenues from Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License matched 3:1 with USFWS federal grant money. The funds are being used to hire four additional seasonal employees during the summer months to perform these additional interview shifts. The Division plans to continue this practice into the foreseeable future. This state-specific increase in sample numbers has increased the accuracy and precision of recreational catch and effort data for RI.

As mentioned above, APAIS has transitioned from contractor-based administration to state-based administration. The transition occurred in 2016. The data collected from APAIS is displayed in table 7a, 7b and 8. Recreational Saltwater License funds were not used to make this transition; it was a federally funded initiative. Agreements have been forged between NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) outlining the duties and responsibilities the Division must accomplish to successfully transition and run the program. To accomplish this transition the Division hired a full time coordinator to administer the program. The funding for this position is provided annually by NOAA Fisheries. The MRIP coordinator will be responsible for maintaining and scheduling personnel who will conduct angler intercepts throughout RI. In addition to staffing duties, the coordinator will be responsible for QA/QC, validation, and disseminating of data collected to the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Survey (ACCSP). ACCSP is part of ASMFC and will be coordinating the collection of data from state partners for delivery to NOAA Fisheries.

The Division has hired two full time field interviewers to perform angler intercepts during waves 2 -6 throughout Rhode Island. NOAA Fisheries provides funding for one time staff as well as for four seasonal employees each year. These employees travel to shore based sites and ride on board head boats to conduct angler interviews routinely as prescribed by APAIS. The full time employees also provide back office support to the MRIP coordinator. As mentioned above, Recreational Saltwater License funds will be used each year to increase the number of interviews beyond the base number funded by NOAA Fisheries. These additional interviews are accomplished by hiring additional seasonal employees during peak fishing waves. The funding for the four additional seasonal employees is provided by Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater

License fees matched 3:1 with USFWS grant money. It is estimated that the four additional temporary samplers will accomplish the same number of additional samples (likely more) than were purchased directly from the contractor in the past. After one year of the new methodology it has been determined that two additional seasonal employees is an effective number to conduct the additional site assignments requested by the Division. By ordering additional samples from NOAA Fisheries, the tiered nature of the sample draws can result in summer weekend days requiring six staff members to carry out all of the site assignments. Non weekend sample draws are less intensive and require fewer staff.

The Division intends to build on the recent improvements to the survey and anticipates better data collection and more accurate information going forward with the program. Table 8 compares 2016 and 2017 APAIS interview statistics. The results compare the first two years of RI State conduct of the survey. Notably the number of completed interviews has increased but refusal rates only slightly decreased. Staff will continue to develop strategies to reduce the number of refusals.

The higher number of completed interviews is a function of higher angler encounter rates. During the early sampling waves of 2016 the Division was still learning the nuances of conducting the survey. A key part of the process involved adjusting the site pressures used by NOAA Fisheries to make the random assignments directing where interviews take place. Rhode Island site pressures needed adjustment because they were not resulting in random draws that would direct field interviewers to popular fishing sites. The adjustments have been accomplished and their effectiveness is reflected in a higher number of completed interviews in 2017 relative to 2016. Field interviewer production rates also contributed to more completed interviews in 2017. Production rates increased from an average of 5.4 interviews/assignment to 7.2 interviews/assignment between 2016 and 2017. The increased field interviewer production rates are the result of the experience gained in our first year of the program and a more refined training regimen.

Refusal rates decreased level between 2016 and 2017. The Division will continue its outreach efforts to reduce this statistic. Most of the refusals occur in Party/Charter mode. Staff has been focused on obtaining interviews from all clients from any given charter boat trip to bring this number down with some good preliminary results. Since 2016, any angler that is not interviewed from a boat party from which at least one angler was interviewed is coded as an initial refusal, and the count of missed anglers only refer to anglers who were eligible but could not be interviewed because the interviewer was busy interviewing other anglers. This procedural change has increased the number of refusals in this mode. Last year the Division constructed a kiosk at the main charter boat dock in the state. The kiosk is meant to raise awareness to the survey and provide a central location from which our field interviewers may operate.

Table 4. RI phone Surveys conducted by ICF International: 2011 through 2017

Category	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
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							(w 2-5)
Successful Phone Interviews	254	244	252	222	232	205	210
Total Phone Calls	72834	74753	90769	108055	116660	143358	180176

Table 5. 2016 RI Phone Interviews Conducted by ICF International

Disposition	WAVE 2		WAVE 3		WAVE 4		WAVE 5		WAVE 6		TOTAL	
	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total
<b>Total Numbers Attempted</b>	<b>10110</b>	<b>7.05%</b>	<b>30776</b>	<b>21.47%</b>	<b>52562</b>	<b>36.66%</b>	<b>38398</b>	<b>26.78%</b>	<b>11512</b>	<b>8.03%</b>	<b>143358</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Non-Response</b>	<b>7590</b>	<b>75.10%</b>	<b>18424</b>	<b>59.90%</b>	<b>23342</b>	<b>44.40%</b>	<b>15231</b>	<b>39.70%</b>	<b>3572</b>	<b>31.00%</b>	<b>68159</b>	<b>47.54%</b>
No Contact	7251	71.70%	17113	55.60%	21356	40.60%	14040	36.60%	3079	26.70%	62839	43.83%
Busy	48	0.50%	32	0.10%	22	0.00%	390	1.00%	4	0.00%	496	0.35%
No Answer	3124	30.90%	5582	18.10%	7010	13.30%	4132	10.80%	562	4.90%	20410	14.24%
Not Available for Screening	3907	38.60%	7942	25.80%	12619	24.00%	8492	22.10%	2276	19.80%	35236	24.58%
Answering Machine	172	1.70%	3557	11.60%	1705	3.20%	1026	2.70%	237	2.10%	6697	4.67%
Contacted Non-Respondents	339	3.40%	1311	4.30%	1986	3.80%	1191	3.10%	493	4.30%	5320	3.71%
Language Problem	16	0.20%	72	0.20%	101	0.20%	78	0.20%	16	0.10%	283	0.20%
Refused	323	3.20%	1239	4.00%	1885	3.60%	1113	2.90%	477	4.10%	5037	3.51%
<b>Response</b>	<b>2520</b>	<b>24.90%</b>	<b>12352</b>	<b>40.10%</b>	<b>29220</b>	<b>55.60%</b>	<b>23167</b>	<b>60.30%</b>	<b>7940</b>	<b>69.00%</b>	<b>75199</b>	<b>52.46%</b>
Respondent Ineligible	2212	21.90%	11373	37.00%	27649	52.60%	21948	57.20%	7574	65.80%	70756	49.36%
Failed Prescreening	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Not in Service	1391	13.80%	8721	28.30%	23159	44.10%	18522	48.20%	6539	56.80%	58332	40.69%
Business Phone	774	7.70%	2417	7.90%	4101	7.80%	3168	8.30%	965	8.40%	11425	7.97%
Wrong Number	0	0.00%	1	0.00%	6	0.00%	4	0.00%	0	0.00%	11	0.01%
Wrong County	28	0.30%	145	0.50%	250	0.50%	158	0.40%	53	0.50%	634	0.44%
Not Permanent Resident	19	0.20%	89	0.30%	133	0.30%	96	0.30%	17	0.10%	354	0.25%
Eligible Non-Fishing Households	299	3.00%	930	3.00%	1483	2.80%	1170	3.00%	356	3.10%	4238	2.96%
No Fishing Last 12 Months	255	2.50%	883	2.90%	1431	2.70%	1117	2.90%	325	2.80%	4011	2.80%
No Fishing Last 2 Months	43	0.40%	45	0.10%	47	0.10%	49	0.10%	30	0.30%	214	0.15%
First-Time Contact/Non-Fishing	1	0.00%	2	0.00%	5	0.00%	4	0.00%	1	0.00%	13	0.01%
Eligible Fishing Households	9	0.10%	49	0.20%	88	0.20%	49	0.10%	10	0.10%	205	0.14%



Table 6. 2017 RI Phone Interviews Conducted by ICF International

Disposition	WAVE 2		WAVE 3		WAVE 4		WAVE 5		WAVE 6		TOTAL	
	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total
<b>Total Numbers Attempted</b>	<b>9878</b>	<b>5.48%</b>	<b>53231</b>	<b>29.54%</b>	<b>60272</b>	<b>33.45%</b>	<b>56795</b>	<b>31.52%</b>			<b>180176</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Non-Response</b>	<b>3334</b>	<b>33.80%</b>	<b>17046</b>	<b>32.00%</b>	<b>20649</b>	<b>34.30%</b>	<b>17955</b>	<b>31.60%</b>			<b>58984</b>	<b>32.74%</b>
No Contact	2953	29.90%	14936	28.10%	19378	32.20%	16044	28.20%			53311	29.59%
Busy	22	0.20%	92	0.20%	118	0.20%	36	0.10%			268	0.15%
No Answer	426	4.30%	3176	6.00%	6367	10.60%	4870	8.60%			14839	8.24%
Not Available for Screening	1878	19.00%	9823	18.50%	11504	19.10%	8421	14.80%			31626	17.55%
Answering Machine	627	6.30%	1845	3.50%	1389	2.30%	2717	4.80%			6578	3.65%
Contacted Non-Respondents	381	3.90%	2110	4.00%	1271	2.10%	1911	3.40%			5673	3.15%
Language Problem	17	0.20%	100	0.20%	79	0.10%	95	0.20%			291	0.16%
Refused	364	3.70%	2010	3.80%	1192	2.00%	1816	3.20%			5382	2.99%
<b>Response</b>	<b>6544</b>	<b>66.20%</b>	<b>36185</b>	<b>68.00%</b>	<b>39623</b>	<b>65.70%</b>	<b>38840</b>	<b>68.40%</b>			<b>121192</b>	<b>67.26%</b>
Respondent Ineligible	6301	63.80%	34990	65.70%	38046	63.10%	37453	65.90%			116790	64.82%
Failed Prescreening	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%			0	0.00%
Not in Service	5489	55.60%	30812	57.90%	34381	57.00%	33086	58.30%			103768	57.59%
Business Phone	772	7.80%	3834	7.20%	3416	5.70%	4076	7.20%			12098	6.71%
Wrong Number	0	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%			2	0.00%
Wrong County	28	0.30%	215	0.40%	127	0.20%	204	0.40%			574	0.32%
Not Permanent Resident	12	0.10%	128	0.20%	121	0.20%	87	0.20%			348	0.19%
Eligible Non-Fishing Households	236	2.40%	1133	2.10%	1519	2.50%	1304	2.30%			4192	2.33%
No Fishing Last 12 Months	211	2.10%	1078	2.00%	1473	2.40%	1252	2.20%			4014	2.23%
No Fishing Last 2 Months	25	0.30%	54	0.10%	30	0.00%	47	0.10%			156	0.09%
First-Time Contact/Non-Fishing	0	0.00%	1	0.00%	16	0.00%	5	0.00%			22	0.01%
Eligible Fishing Households	7	0.10%	62	0.10%	58	0.10%	83	0.10%			210	0.12%

Table 7a. APAIS Interview Statistics from 2016 Assignments. (CH = Party/Charter, PR = Private/Rental Boat, SH = Shore, HB = Head Boat)

Year	Wave	Mode	Assignments	Completed	Initially Refused	Language Barrier	Missed Anglers	Productivity
2016	2	CH	18	0	0	0	0	0
2016	2	HB	6	103	53	2	0	17.17
2016	2	PR	18	3	7	0	1	0.17
2016	2	SH	18	10	3	1	7	0.56
2016	3	CH	28	94	343	24	11	3.36
2016	3	HB	13	161	101	20	0	12.38
2016	3	PR	43	89	89	7	25	2.07
2016	3	SH	31	52	16	15	29	1.68
2016	4	CH	30	168	573	22	80	5.6
2016	4	HB	18	308	313	54	0	17.11
2016	4	PR	63	225	168	40	111	3.57
2016	4	SH	42	156	103	74	69	3.71
2016	5	CH	28	146	327	27	53	5.21
2016	5	HB	12	168	65	32	0	14
2016	5	PR	43	274	137	23	62	6.37
2016	5	SH	29	77	28	19	28	2.66
2016	6	CH	10	29	33	0	0	2.9
2016	6	HB	5	45	16	34	0	9
2016	6	PR	30	17	10	0	1	0.57
2016	6	SH	25	20	2	7	3	0.8
<b>2016</b>			<b>510</b>	<b>2145</b>	<b>2387</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>5.44</b>

Table 7a. APAIS Interview Statistics from 2017 Assignments. (CH = Party/Charter, PR = Private/Rental Boat, SH = Shore, HB = Head Boat)

Year	Wave	Mode	Assignments	Completed	Initially Refused	Language Barrier	Missed Anglers	Productivity
2017	2	CH	11	0	0	0	0	0
2017	2	HB	4	59	5	3	0	14.75
2017	2	PR	14	27	2	5	5	1.93
2017	2	SH	14	38	8	0	8	2.71
2017	3	CH	38	164	260	2	29	4.32
2017	3	HB	12	192	130	43	0	16
2017	3	PR	52	229	90	24	40	4.4
2017	3	SH	35	174	99	59	77	4.97
2017	4	CH	34	596	422	18	250	17.53
2017	4	HB	17	319	218	32	0	18.76
2017	4	PR	69	609	235	67	251	8.83
2017	4	SH	52	384	136	100	128	7.38
2017	5	CH	37	279	306	1	105	7.54
2017	5	HB	11	118	50	5	0	10.73
2017	5	PR	58	335	126	10	103	5.78
2017	5	SH	39	169	36	21	59	4.33
2017	6	CH	10	20	28	0	8	2
2017	6	HB	6	56	36	10	0	9.33
2017	6	PR	29	46	24	4	8	1.59
2017	6	SH	18	27	6	12	21	1.5
<b>2017</b>			<b>560</b>	<b>3841</b>	<b>2217</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>1092</b>	<b>7.22</b>

Table 8. Summary of APAIS interview Statistics from 2016 – 2017 assignments by wave.

Year	Wave	Completed	Refused	Missed	Percent Refused	Ratio Refused/Missed
2016	2	116	63	8	35.20%	7.88
2016	3	396	549	65	58.10%	8.45
2016	4	857	1157	260	57.45%	4.45
2016	5	665	557	143	45.58%	3.90
2016	6	111	61	4	35.47%	15.25
<b>2016</b>		<b>2145</b>	<b>2387</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>53.00%</b>	<b>4.97</b>
2017	2	124	15	13	10.79%	1.15
2017	3	759	579	146	43.27%	3.97
2017	4	1908	1011	629	34.64%	1.61
2017	5	901	518	267	36.50%	1.94
2017	6	149	94	37	38.68%	2.54
<b>2017</b>		<b>3841</b>	<b>2217</b>	<b>1092</b>	<b>36.60%</b>	<b>2.03</b>

#### **IV. Issues & Initiatives**

##### **a. Increasing the Number of Local Vendors**

Although the internet remains the most convenient means for obtaining a license for most people, it is apparent that a portion of the population continues to prefer to obtain a license, in-person, at a local store or shop. Such individuals may either not have, or may not be comfortable using a home computer and printer. Additionally, some individuals may have the need to pay for their license using cash, instead of a debit or credit card, which is required for the online transaction. This precipitates the need to maintain and increase brick and mortar vendors in RI.

To date, there are twenty local vendors authorized to issue licenses at their places of business. This is up from just seven vendors at the start of the 2011 fishing season. The locations of the twenty-five vendors cover the major population areas of Rhode Island, including Block Island. Increasing the number of vendors should remain a top priority, since adding more vendors to the program will make it easier for more people to get their licenses, thereby enhancing compliance.

The Division applied for and was awarded a grant from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to administer a vendor-incentive program. The program started in 2011. Pursuant to the program, the Division loans computers and printers to any establishment that agrees to vend licenses for a period of five years. The Division has enough funds to provide equipment for up to 50 vendors. This grant ended as of November of 2015. The Division has exhausted its supply of computers.

In 2018 RIDEM is rolling out a new outdoor recreational licensing system which will allow saltwater, freshwater, and hunting licenses to be purchased over the internet at once. By way of background, the saltwater and freshwater licenses were already available online, hunting licenses were still being issued via a paper system. The new system has both an online and agent module to allow both online and brick and mortar sales outlets.

Combining all three licenses into one system should result in the saltwater license being available at more brick and mortar locations. There are several agents throughout the state that in past only sold freshwater and/or hunting licenses, the new system will allow saltwater license sales at these locations, notably Wal-Mart.

#### **b. Developing Regulations for the License Program**

In 2010 the Division developed and enacted comprehensive regulations for the recreational license program. The regulations largely codify the key statutory provisions governing the license program. The Division tracks recreational fishing issues and strives to keep pace with advances in technology as it pertains to fishing licenses and will amend regulations if needed to address current issues. At this time, the Division plans to pursue legislation to supplement the new combined online system to create a license that would cover saltwater, freshwater, and hunting licenses. This legislation would also address license fees and agent fees. It is not anticipated that saltwater license fees will increase, hunting license fees may need to be adjusted higher. Allowing for a combination purchase will enhance the customer service aspect of the licensing program, and is therefore an important initiative for the State.

#### **c. Meeting with the Recreational Saltwater License Study Group**

The Division plans to continue meeting annually with the Recreational Saltwater License Study Group. This ad-hoc group worked closely with the Division on the development of the original saltwater recreational license bill. The purpose of these annual meetings is to review and get input on the status of the overall license program, as well as the draft budget for the saltwater license restricted receipt account. These meetings are in addition to, not in lieu of, the Council and public comment processes set forth by the license statute.

#### **d. Allowing Volunteer Contributions to the Restricted Receipt Account**

It has been suggested that some anglers and spear fishers would welcome the opportunity to make an additional, voluntarily contribution to the restricted receipt account associated with the license program at the time they purchase their license. It is unclear whether this could be done without additional statutory authority, but if there is enough interest on the part of the Rhode Island recreational fishing community to pursue the initiative, it can be pursued further. Examples of voluntary methods for contribution include license plate programs and donations on state tax forms. There are no proposals to develop additional means of acquiring voluntary contributions at this time.

#### **e. Streamlining the Online License Renewal Process**

The Division has continued to coordinate with RII in an effort to streamline the renewal process, namely, by having prior contact information recalled and re-inserted, with an onus on the licensee to verify that it is up-to-date and accurate. Phone numbers remain an important data field, the system still requires phone numbers to be re-entered

every year, to help ensure that they are up-to-date and accurate. The future of MRIP's methods is still unclear but will likely shift to a mail based survey. This change will make the address of the applicant the key data element. It is unclear if the telephone number will become self-populated from previous license data after the switch is made to the mail survey, but for now it will still be a required data element of the RI program.

It should be noted that the new online system took ease of license renewal into its design specification's. A new unique identifying number will be assigned to each license holder that will directly link to an account in the system. The user accounts will maintain a history of past transactions and store all demographic information. These changes should reduce the amount of time any given user spends renewing their recreational saltwater fishing license.

#### **f. Compliance**

As mentioned above, the number of licenses issued for the past three years has remained static at approximately 42,000 until 2016. During the 2017 and 2016 fiscal cycles, this number increased to 47,000 licenses. Increases were seen in both the resident and non-resident demographic. Although it is too soon to predict whether these sales numbers will be sustained, it is a positive sign that general awareness to the licensing program has increased. It is speculated that the presence of APAIS field interviewers dressed in RIDFW uniforms was also a factor in raising awareness of the program or perception that an angler's license may be checked more frequently. The Division is vested in providing outreach and education to the public, this positive sign is encouraging and fosters a belief that the outreach funds are well spent.

It is important to know how closely the number of licenses tracks the actual number of anglers in order to assess the effectiveness of the saltwater license program. RIDEM Division of Law Enforcement (DLE) conducts field checks of the recreational license to ensure compliance with the saltwater license requirement with good results. These field checks are essential to the success of the program, the officer's invest numerous patrol hours checking for compliance and are the Department's hands on ambassadors. On average approximately 1,200 license checks take place annually. These results have yielded an approximate 90% compliance rate with the Saltwater Recreational License program. DLE states that this is similar to rates seen by other regional law enforcement agencies. While 90% is a good compliance rate it still remains necessary to promote a high level of awareness of the saltwater license program to keep noncompliance in check, to facilitate good quality data collection, and continue to foster the gains in sales from FY2017 in to the future.

The Division will continue working to increase compliance as well as prevent license sales from eroding. Several ideas provided by the Saltwater Recreational License advisory group will be pursued to this end. The Division collects email addresses from license applicants; these email addresses will be used in the future to send an electronic

reminder to renew their licenses annually. The Division initiated the first of these email reminders in 2017. The new online recreational licensing system will allow the Division to continue this functionally for all three types of recreational licenses types.

It is generally accepted that the frequent recreational angler is aware of the recreational license requirement; a lack of compliance likely exists in the casual angling population. To address this compliance gap the Division expanded its distribution of its saltwater fishing magazine to more diverse locations such as popular tourist hotels and attractions.

## **V. Expenditures and Budget**

### **a. Preface**

The goal of the saltwater recreational fishing license is to promote healthy and diverse recreational fisheries which are easily accessible by the fishing public. By providing funds to promote better data collection and stock assessment, the license leads to better management programs which should ensure sustainable fishing in to the future. Robust fishing opportunities coupled with modern, well thought out, and convenient fishing access is ultimately the best strategy to increase awareness of the license to ensure that all Rhode Islanders are participating in the program equally. To this end the saltwater recreational license program will continue to direct funding towards recreational fishing programs that work towards completing our goal.

As noted previously, in accordance with the provisions of the RIGL Chapter 20-2.2, all funds from the saltwater license fees are deposited into a restricted receipt account that can only be used for the purposes list below.

- Administering and enforcing the Rhode Island license program;
- Managing Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries, with particular reference to improving state-based recreational fishery catch and effort statistics and stock assessments; and
- Enhancing recreational fishing opportunities in the State.

It is important to note that this account does not need to be spent down every year. License revenue that is not spent remains in the account and is available for projects the following year and into the future. If designated funds are not spent in any given category they are kept in that category for the next budget cycle.

The Division undertakes a range of programs that address and support recreational fishing interests in Rhode Island. These programs are largely funded via a federal grant administered by the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) Program. The SFR Program is derived from excise taxes on fishing and boating equipment, and is structured as a user-pay/user-benefit program. The SFR program is the primary source of funding for recreational fishing programs in Rhode Island, providing some \$2 million annually. SFR grants require a 25 percent non-federal match.

The primary RIDEM programs pertaining to recreational fishing fall into the following general categories:

- Fish stock assessments
- Recreational catch and effort estimates
- Management programs and regulations
- Boating and fishing access
- Artificial reefs and habitat protection/enhancement
- Public information, outreach, and education
- Enforcement

In developing annual budgets for the recreational saltwater license account, RIDEM draws upon the following guidelines: projects must be consistent with the licensing statute; address the needs and interests of the recreational fishing community in Rhode Island; and maximize opportunities and benefits by leveraging federal SFR funds whenever possible.

#### **b. FY17 Expenditures**

During the 2017 fiscal year, a total of \$214,858 was spent on the Rhode Island Marine Recreational Fishing Program (Table 8). This amount is up from the \$161,213 expended in FY2016. Of that total:

- \$20,821 was used to hire two additional seasonal field interviewers to accomplish additional MRIP intercept interviews.
- \$80,000 was used to provide funding for the new ramp installation at Goddard Memorial State Park.
- \$92,357 was used for personnel and equipment costs in support of the Division's finfish surveys for stock assessments.
- \$6,672 was used for the management of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Program.
- \$5,898 was used to support the Division's boating/fishing access site maintenance program.
  - Mount Hope- regrade ramp area and remove old dock and gangway
  - Narrow River Ramp- graded parking area and replaced handicap only signs
  - Pawcatuck River Boat Ramp, Westerly- removed debris and trash reported by enforcement and made temporary repairs to the broken section of the ramp on several occasions
  - Sakonnet Point boat ramp-replaced signs
  - Galilee Boat Ramp-checked periodically and replaced signs
  - Charlestown Breachway- signs and graded road
  - Ft. Adams - transported gravel for fill
  - Gull Cove-picked up trash from citizen cleanup
  - All ramps - posted signs for no parking and trailers only



- Camp Cronin – Installed signs and trash removal following reopening
- Contracted portable sanitary facilities at Quonochontaug, Camp Cronin, Galilee, and Deep Hole salt water fishing access areas from April through October
- Removed trash from portajons at Cronin, Deep Hole and Quonochontaug
- Weekapaug fishing access-grade road and parking area- signage and trash. Removed trash following volunteer cleanup
- Charlestown Breechway-repair and regrade boat ramp. Removed PWC signs
- Quonochontaug- signs replaced and trash removal. Removed PWC signs
- Seapowet- habitat improvement work and relocation of parking area
- Deep Hole fishing area- grade parking lot and road
- Kings Beach Fishing access- install new signs and delivered gravel
- Black Point-replaced damaged signs
- \$9,110 was used for public education, information, and outreach, including production of the fifth annual Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing Guide (\$3,240), the one page laminated fishing abstract (\$1,233) and new kiosk at the Galilee charter boat dock (\$4,637).

Table 8. FY2017 Recreational Saltwater License Program budget.

Category	FY16 Carryover	FY17 Revenue	FY17 Available	FY17 Expended
Enhanced MRIP Data Collection	\$99,524	\$0	\$99,524	\$20,821
Boating/Fishing Access I	\$106,339	\$41,526	\$147,865	\$80,000
Boating/Fishing Access II	\$23,062	\$20,763	\$43,825	\$5,898
Rec Fisheries Support	\$7,722	\$20,763	\$28,485	\$6,672
Fish Stock Assessment Support	\$0	\$124,579	\$124,579	\$92,357
Artificial Reef	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Public Education, Information, and Outreach	\$32,569	\$0	\$32,569	\$9,110
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$269,225</b>	<b>\$207,631</b>	<b>\$476,856</b>	<b>\$214,858</b>

**c. FY18 Budget**

The budget for FY18 is described in Table 9. It is anticipated that the restricted receipt account will receive another \$200,000 from FY18 license sales, and the proposed FY18 Programmatic Budget, as set forth below, is based on that amount. The revenue will be allocated into each of the budget categories based on projected short and long term spending.

Table 9. FY2018 Recreational Saltwater License Program budget.

Category	FY17 Carryover	FY18 Revenue	FY 18 Available	FY18 Budgeted
Enhanced MRIP Data Collection	\$78,703	\$10,000	\$88,703	(\$10,000)
Boating/Fishing Access I	\$67,865	\$40,000	\$107,865	(\$75,000)
Boating/Fishing Access II	\$37,927	\$10,000	\$47,927	(\$10,000)
Rec Fisheries Support	\$21,813	\$10,000	\$31,813	(\$10,000)
Fish Stock Assessment Support	\$32,221	\$100,000	\$132,222	(\$100,000)
Artificial Reef	\$0	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
Public Education, Information, and Outreach	\$23,459	\$20,000	\$43,459	(\$7,740)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$229,767</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$461,989</b>	<b>(\$212,740)</b>

**1. Enhanced MRIP Data Collection (\$10,000)**

**Proposal.** Continue to expand the recreational catch and effort data collection program for Rhode Island (under the MRIP sampling umbrella) by providing funding for add-on intercept surveys to increase the overall precision of the overall catch estimates and better enable mode-specific (e.g., shore-based) estimates.

**Rationale.** The MRIP program is the major source for marine recreational catch and effort fishing assessments. Data collected via the program is used to estimate catch (landings and discards) and effort by species/state/mode/wave. Estimates of catch and effort are used to develop status of the stock for all species, including striped bass, summer flounder, scup, tautog, bluefish, winter flounder, cod, black sea bass, and weakfish. In addition, indices of abundance using catch per unit of effort are incorporated into age-structured models to track abundance in comparison to other fisheries independent surveys. Estimates of catch and effort can have high variability in part due to sampling levels. These sampling levels are directly correlated to the level of funding allocated for each survey.

The marine recreational catch and effort fishing assessments yield fishery dependent information which, coupled with the fishery independent trawl and seine surveys, serve as the basis for marine recreational fishing regulations. The accuracy and fairness of recreational fishing regulations is directly related to the quality and precision of the assessments. Better accuracy and precision will lead to a better understanding of fishing activities by mode. This information is paramount if the Division is to pursue mode splits such as differential regulations for shore-based fishermen versus boat-based fishermen. Mode specific regulations require adequate survey and sampling of the two modes to enable relatively precise estimates of respective catch and effort.

The proposed enhanced data collection initiative will continue to attempt to maintain sampling to prior levels (2002-2005). The \$10,000 investment will leverage an additional \$30,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$40,000 in total programmatic benefits. The \$40,000 will allow the Division to hire four additional seasonal field interviewers to staff additional samples ordered from NOAA Fisheries. The addition of these two staff members plus the full time coordinator, one full time field interviewers, and four seasonal field interviewers funded via NOAA Fisheries base MRIP grant bring the total number of staff working on the APAIS to seven. The Division has a contract with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to provide staffing support for these employees. The \$10,000 figure was derived from personnel costs incurred in 2017.

## **2. Boating/Fishing Access I (\$75,000)**

*Proposal.* Major renovations at Charlestown Breachway and Quonochontaug boat ramps.

*Rationale.* The next fishing access projects to be funded with recreational saltwater license funds will be the ramps located at Charlestown Breachway campground, and the Quonochontaug fishing area. The Godard Memorial State Park boat ramp is complete and Rocky Point fishing pier has secure funding. Both boat ramps are heavily used during the summer and fall. During the winter of 2017 both ramps sustained significant erosional damage and need repair. The damage is such that the existing ramps will need to be completely replaced and regraded. The funding provided by the Saltwater Recreational Fishing License and USFWS SFR will begin once the construction has started at both sites. Using \$75,000 in licensing to leverage \$225,000 in SFR funds frees up \$300,000 to be used on these selected projects, expediting the public access program as a whole.

## **3. Boating/Fishing Access II (\$10,000)**

*Proposal.* Continue to support the Division's boating/fishing access site maintenance program.

*Rationale.* The Division is responsible for maintaining 60 state-owned and operated boating/ fishing access sites used by an estimated 28,000 boats that are less than

24 feet in length. In order to foster compliance and repeat participation in the saltwater recreational license program, it is as important to keep our public access points clean and functional as it is to build new ones. The Division lacks adequate resources to undertake all of the work that's needed to maintain these sites on a regular basis. The allocation of these funds from the license fee account, leveraged with federal funds, supports the Division's ability to properly maintain state-owned boating/fishing access sites throughout Rhode Island. The \$10,000 investment will leverage an additional \$30,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$40,000 in total programmatic benefits. This amount was estimated based on past years costs.

#### **4. Recreational Fisheries Management Support (\$10,000)**

*Proposal.* Continue to provide staff time, equivalent to a full-time employee (FTE), for the Division's Recreational Marine Fisheries Program. Staff will coordinate a range of projects and activities that relate directly to priority marine recreational fishing issues.

*Rationale.* In the past, the Division has never had staff time completely dedicated to marine recreational fishing programs. The \$10,000 investment will leverage an additional \$30,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$40,000 for staff support. The Division requires staff dedicated to RI's marine recreational fisheries program and proposes maintaining an FTE equivalent to focus on the following issues:

- Coordinating the overall license program, in concert with Rhode Island Interactive and local vendors; and serving as the conduit for data management between the program and NOAA Fisheries, pursuant to the Division's MOU with NOAA Fisheries.
- Coordinating recreational fishing assessments; continued coordination of RIDFW APAIS; serving on the ACCSP's Recreational Technical Committee; advancing Rhode Island's electronic reporting program.
- Coordinating the development of marine recreational fishing management programs in Rhode Island; applying recreational fishing assessments to recreational management programs; developing mode-specific recreational fishing management programs and other recreational fishing alternatives for important ASMFC-managed species.
- Serving as a principal point of contact for recreational fishing groups and organizations throughout Rhode Island.
- Assisting with the coordination of the Division's boating/fishing access program – including assessment, maintenance, and management of existing sites; pursuing grants to upgrade/improve existing sites and develop new sites; and conveying information on access opportunities to the Rhode Island recreational fishing community.

## **5. Fish Stock Assessment Support (\$100,000)**

*Proposal.* Support the continuation of finfish stock assessment surveys of recreationally important species in Rhode Island waters.

*Rationale.* The key programs funded via the federal SFR grant are the continuation of the Narragansett Bay trawl survey; the juvenile finfish seine survey conducted in the coastal ponds, and the newly developed fish pot survey. These projects are important annual finfish fisheries surveys in Rhode Island waters with long standing time series of data. In the past, these programs have been funded by the Division's federal SFR grant, and matched entirely with commercial fishing license fee revenues. Given the importance of these programs to the recreational fishing community, it stands to reason that a portion of the recreational fishing license fees should continue to cover the non-federal match requirements of the SFR grant pertaining to these projects. Project reports are submitted annually for these programs to USFWS and are available upon request. The \$100,000 investment will leverage an additional \$300,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$400,000 in total programmatic benefits.

## **6. Artificial Reef Support (\$0)**

*Proposal.* The Division is exploring the installation of small scale artificial reefs adjacent to state fishing pier at locations throughout the state. The Division does not anticipate any artificial reef work beginning in 2018 but will set aside \$10,000 in this budget category in anticipation of projects in 2019.

*Rationale.* The Division is currently working on a fish habitat enhancement project with support from The Nature Conservancy and the USFWS SFR program. The project is in the early stages of a major investigation of fish habitat quality in upper Narragansett Bay over the next two years. This information will be used to develop plans for habitat improvement opportunities as well as evaluate the most effective methodologies. A variety of habitat enhancement and restoration techniques are being considered, including "reef balls". The reef balls are small low relief concrete domes with various holes to provide shelter for small fish. The Division is planning to place an array of these reef balls at the Rocky Point fishing pier under construction. Once complete the Division will evaluate other locations for deployment.

## **7. Public Education, Information, and Outreach (\$7,740)**

*Proposal.* To continue the annual one-page water resistant regulation abstract and the Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing Magazine, fund a youth fishing camp conducted by the Rhode Island Saltwater Angler's Association, and purchase new field interviewer uniforms.

***Rationale.*** Although compliance with the new license program has generally been good, it is clear that a number of recreational fishermen and spear fishers remain unaware of the program, not only in terms of the need to obtain a license, but also with regard to the purpose of the program and the benefits it provides to the recreational fishing community. Since the primary purpose of the license program is to develop a comprehensive database of contact information for all recreational fishermen and spear fishers, it makes sense to continue making a modest investment in public outreach, aimed at increasing awareness among the recreational fishing community regarding the license program, particularly during the summer season, thereby enhancing compliance and bolstering programmatic support.

Each year the Division publishes a one page regulation abstract which contains the current year's recreational fishing rules and regulations. These are printed on glossy water resistant paper and supplied to various locations throughout the state. The abstracts are heavily utilized and raise awareness and foster compliance to the current regulations.

In 2017, the Division published the fifth annual edition of the Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing Magazine. The publication, done in a colorful and appealing magazine style, offers a wealth of information of interest to the marine recreational fishing community in the State. The guide informs fishermen on the issues associated with the licensing program and the associated benefits. It also provides recreational fishing information as well as other issues of interest to the community, including current regulations, informative articles, and lists of local bait and tackle shops and party/charter boat services. While the Division continues to provide information to the Rhode Island recreational fishing community via the Division's website and an annual abstract that features recreational and commercial fishing regulations, the magazine enhances the Division's ability to connect with and inform recreational fishermen, and to promote recreational fishing in Rhode Island. The publication has been well-received, and so it makes sense to continue utilizing a small portion of funds from the license account to fund it annually.

During both 2016 and 2017, the Division participated in the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association's (RISSA) youth fishing camp. Prior to 2016 there were no dedicated Saltwater Fishing community based instructional programs in Rhode Island. During 2016, RISSA conducted a successful pilot youth fishing camp for 50 children between the ages of 7 and 14 on June 28-30. The camp didn't just focus on fishing techniques but additionally taught the attendees about fishing regulations, ecology and sustainable practices. Youth programs have been recognized as important to keeping vitality in the recreational fishing industry as well as developing a more informed and responsible fishing populace. (1) This educational program was a pilot program intended to show proof of concept, funding is required to keep it going into the future. The Division provided funding to RISSA in 2017 to keep the program going into future to fill this programmatic gap.

The 2017 camp was funded completely by the Division's Aquatic Education program via credits for volunteer hours spent by RISSA member's and USFWS Sportfish

Aquatic Education grant. The Division proposes to continue to support and fund the camp into the future. While it is anticipated that volunteer hours will provide the match for the camps federal funds, recreational saltwater license funds will be available to cover any shortfall.

A memorandum of understanding has been established with RISAA to conduct the camp. The day camp will be run by RISAA with RIDEM participation and oversight. The camp will continue to accommodate 50 children between the ages of 7 and 14. The camp will be planned, coordinated, and implemented by a hired camp coordinator. The base location for the camp will be Rocky Point State Park, Warwick, RI. Part of the camp will involve children fishing on boats launched at local marinas for two of the camp days. These two days will require the use of a bus to transport children to and from Rocky Point State Park. Vessel captains will be provided by RISAA. The camp will last for three days include but is not limited to the following activities:

- Classroom setting instruction of basic fish biology and identification, sustainable fishing methods and practices, fishing tackle, safety on and around the water, fishing regulations, and recreational data collection
- Hands on fish capture and identification using beach seines and dip nets
- Hands on knot tying and casting instruction
- Hands on fishing from shore
- Hands on fishing from boats

The proposed outreach budget would spend \$7,740 of Recreational Saltwater Fishing License funds to leverage additional \$23,220 in USFWS SFR funding resulting in \$30,960 used for outreach and education pertaining to the recreational fishing license.

## **VII. Looking Ahead to FY19**

There is cautious optimism that the increased revenue generated in FY16 – FY17 from Saltwater Recreational Licenses will hold steady into the future, as such we are looking into other programs to enhance recreational fishing opportunities in Rhode Island. One such program, mentioned above, is to place artificial reefs adjacent to state fishing piers. The Division is in the process of planning the design and purchase of a new research vessel. This vessel would be used to survey sportfish species and specifically be used to conduct the Black Sea Bass pot survey (among other activities). It is anticipated that recreational saltwater license fees will be used to partially match the federal funding required for this purchase.