



# The Watch

Doug MacPherson, Chairman



The RISAA Legislative Committee’s mission is to provide, in partnership with the Affiliated Clubs, a forum for improving the knowledge and understanding of fishery-related and government issues that affect recreational anglers. An informed membership encourages involvement and advocacy. The Legislative Committee will strive to advocate responsible fishery decision.

The Committee is comprised of RISAA Members and delegates from the Affiliated Clubs. The Committee meets two or three times a year, depending on the number of fishery and/or legislative issues that develop.

## Be careful what you wish for

I can only guess how many times, through the years of each new year’s hearings, how often it was said that MFRSS was a terrible program and needed to be improved. Well apparently, we were not alone. In 2004 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) “requested the National Research Council (NRC) to conduct a review of all the surveys operated or financed by NOAA Fisheries in use in the United States and it’s territories”. The final report was released in 2006.

The NRC made specific recommendations for improvements to the way NOAA Fisheries was collecting data and compiling recreational fishing statistics. The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which is responsible for collecting the data, began working on implementing the suggestions from the NRC study. Many of the improvements to the survey methods have been guided by the original NRC review.

“Specific initiatives that have been implemented based on the NRC recommendations include the creation of the **National Saltwater Anglers Registry**, the **Re-Estimation of Recreational Catch Estimates** (dating back to 2004) and the overhaul of the **Angler Intercept Survey** design to remove potential sources of bias”.

Other issues that are being addressed include how to most effectively account for the “for-hire sector” (charter and party boats) and the best survey methods for the shore and private boat recreational fishery.

One of the results of this has been the creation of a new survey design called the **Access Point Angler Intercept Survey** (APAIS). There have been changes as a result.



**Michael Bucko,**  
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Sampling is now conducted at all times of the day and they are no longer assuming the catch at night is the same as the catch during the day. Samplers are now required to follow a fixed schedule at selected sites when doing intercepts and staying at the designated sites as scheduled. An online registry of most public fishing sites from Maine to Louisiana has been completed and is used for site assignment for the samplers. This review is available to the public for anyone looking for a spot to fish and can be found at:

<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/msd/html/siteRegister.jsp>

### Other Changes

In 2015, a new survey was introduced to estimate the overall numbers of fishing trips/effort in any given period. One of the more significant findings was that the random dialing of coastal homes was no longer effective, partly as a result of the diminishing number of homes with land line phone service which could no longer be reached by the survey. Additionally, it was concluded that people receiving a random call were not very accurate as far as remembering details of recent fishing trips.

This has resulted in the creation and implementation of a **mail survey**. The research conclusion was that this survey gets better information



**Massachusetts Marine Fisheries APAIS Surveyors**

within the time frame required. In creating the mailing list for the survey, information from the National Recreational Fishing Registrations are matched up to the U.S. Postal household database in order to include virtually every relevant household in the country.

### Major Changes Possible for Recreational Fisherman

Another area of concern in the NRC review was that there was a “mismatch” between the way information was being gathered and how it was used to estimate catch.

If you read this column last month you may remember my concern with the new **Summer Flounder population survey**. As a result of “Re-estimation” of recreational catch going all the way back to 2004 it was concluded that there were more fish than previously believed because of the larger numbers recreational catch. As a result, there was a large increase in catch quotas. However, because of the uncertainty and new projections, we were left with status quo for this season. According to MRIP their findings was that “there was no across-the-board trends, either in size or direction, of changes in the estimates.”

Case in point, there was a re-estimate also used in the just released **Striped Bass Assessment** which increased recreational catch numbers, but they were considered not significant in relation to the overall population decline. **(to page 34)**