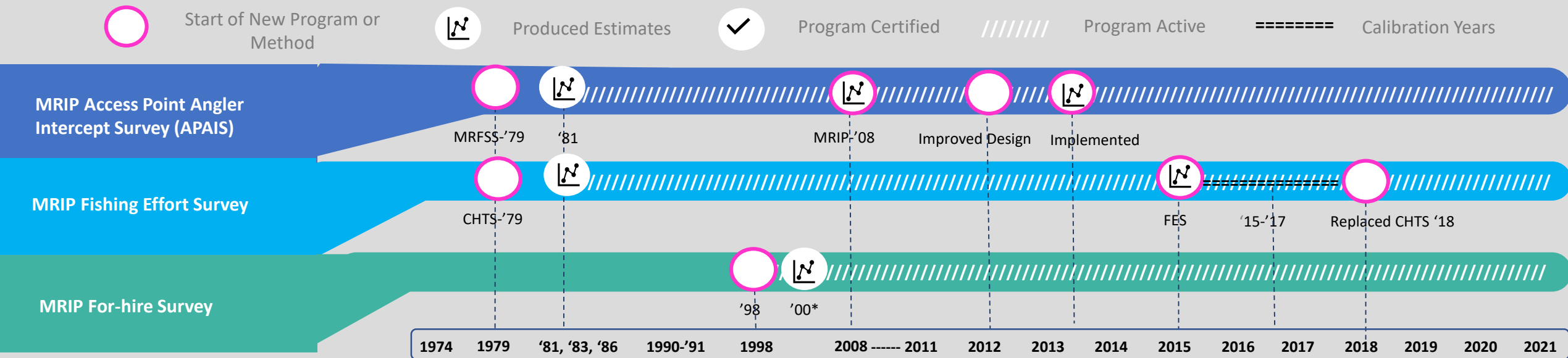


# Changes to the Marine Recreational Information Program and Management Implications



NOAA Fisheries uses the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) to collect recreational fishing data across the United States.

Throughout time, the recreational data collection program has undergone revisions to improve the reporting, data collection, and analysis of recreational fishing information. Each time the program undergoes changes, the data collected by previous versions of the program is calibrated, meaning, they're revised back in time based on the new methodology. These calibrations impact our understanding of what has been harvested historically, and can potentially impact new catch limits and allocations between fishing sectors.

The MRIP Program has recently undergone several revisions which are outlined below:

**Catch data** is estimated by collecting information through dockside intercept surveys. In 2013, the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) implemented the following improvements:

- Dockside intercepts are conducted day and night rather than only during daytime hours.
- Public access sites are chosen to be sampled based on fishing mode and fishing pressure to increase sampling efficiency.
- Samplers stay at a site for the duration of a sampling assignment rather than having the ability to leave before the set time interval has elapsed.

**Effort data** is an estimate of how many fishing trips are taken. Implemented in 2018, the Fishing Effort Survey (FES) collects information about private boat trips and shore based fishing activity. FES implemented the following improvements:

- The FES survey contacts anglers more efficiently using a mail survey instead of a phone survey based on random dialing of coastal household telephone numbers.
- It targets anglers using a combination of the USPS address database, and state-based fishing license information.
- More complete information is collected by mail because respondents have more time to answer questions and consider their answers.
- The mail survey has a much higher response rate compared to the old telephone-based survey.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why are data being changed from the previous MRFSS and MRIP-CHTS surveys to the new MRIP-FES?**

Data are being changed because NOAA Fisheries identified that the previous survey was using outdated methods to capture angler effort information. Therefore, survey sampling was capturing less of the population over time and consequently, missing important pieces of effort data. The new MRIP-FES program uses a mail survey to capture effort data more efficiently. Additionally, National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates management measures be based on best scientific information available. Since NOAA Fisheries improved the MRIP survey and the data, the Council is obligated to use the new information to guide management decisions. Finally, since NOAA Fisheries is using MRIP-FES to monitor landings in-season, converting historical landings and catch limits to MRIP-FES ensures that harvest monitoring is in the same currency used to set harvest limits.

### **How is MRIP-FES being incorporated into management?**

Data from the MRIP recreational fishing survey are incorporated into management measures in two ways. First, data are integrated into the Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment process. New MRIP-FES estimates are integrated as each new stock assessment is conducted by converting landings for each species into the new FES units back in time. This could impact fisheries managers' perceptions of stock health, catch limits, and allocation for each species. Second, since MRIP-FES is the current data collection program, it is also being used to monitor fishing quotas.

### **How does conversion to FES impact catch limits and harvest specifications? (OFL, ABC, ACL)**

FES estimates often indicate that recreational catch and effort is larger than previously thought. Higher FES landings estimates can result in new OFL, ABC, and ACL recommendations because fisheries managers' understanding of how much harvest a stock can withstand can adjust estimates of stock productivity.

### **How does conversion to FES impact allocations?**

Conversion from older program units (MRFSS, CHTS) to the new FES may impact allocations, but it is species-dependent. In many cases, conversion to FES increases recreational catch estimates back in time. Meaning, the recreational sector has been harvesting more than previously thought historically. In these cases, allocation percentages may shift to reflect this new understanding.

### **How does conversion to FES impact quota monitoring?**

Beginning in 2018, recreational harvest was monitored in FES. If catch limits are set using a previous MRIP data program, then quota monitoring and catch limits are set and monitored using different currency. This means that catch limits have to be converted to whichever unit is used for quota monitoring until a stock assessment updates catch limits to FES units.

### **Will conversion to FES impact fishing seasons?**

Conversion to FES could potentially impact fishing seasons. Since, overall, FES shows greater recreational harvest, this could mean that quotas are reached faster than previously thought because effort and landings are higher. However, increases in estimates of recreational harvest back in time can offset this effect because those increases may also impact perception of stock productivity and consequently, increase catch limits.

### **Will conversion to FES impact commercial fishing?**

It's possible that conversion to FES can impact commercial fishing. Even though conversion to MRIP-FES units is only for the recreational sector, the commercial sector can still be impacted through changes to sector allocations, if a species has a stock ACL, or if conversion to FES units in a stock assessment determines that a stock is overfished and/or experiencing overfishing.