



Maine Department of Marine Resources Recreational Saltwater Fishing Newsletter Spring 2024

Dear anglers,

You may have been approached in person or by phone/email by Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR) staff regarding your participation in NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) national network of recreational fishing surveys. This newsletter provides insight on the work conducted by ME DMR and shares a few summaries from the 2023 season. The monitoring of catch, effort, and participation along with demographic, social, and economic characteristics of those who participate in saltwater recreational fishing in US waters allows for monitoring trends, evaluating impacts of management regulations, and projecting what impacts various management scenarios will have on marine fisheries. Your participation in these survey programs provide the invaluable data upon which the management of our fisheries depend. To those of you who participated last season, we extend out gratitude for your contribution to bettering the estimates of Maine's recreational catch and effort.

- ME DMR Recreational Fisheries Program staff

Recreational Fisheries Programs

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Large Pelagic Intercept Survey (LPIS)

Large Pelagic Telephone Survey (LPTS)

MRIP since 2008; called MFRSS between 1979-2008

Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) A voluntary survey of marine recreational anglers at the end of their fishing trip, with a focus on gathering information about catch, participation and fishing effort. Interviewers are assigned to pre-selected coastal fishing access locations for various time blocks, seven days a week during the sampling season. Head boat anglers are surveyed during their trip by ride-along interviewers, allowing direct collection of discard data as well as harvest data. *Conducted by ME DMR on behalf of NOAA Fisheries, May through October in Maine.*

Fishing Effort Survey (FES) Households are sampled from a national database of mailing addresses, which is supplemented with information from state-based recreational fishing license and registration programs. Because research indicates that both anglers and non-anglers are more likely to respond to a survey that includes questions about topics other than fishing, the FES is designed as a weather and outdoor activity survey. This helps improve the number of responses received while reducing the risk of nonresponse bias. *Conducted by an outside NOAA Fisheries contractor.*

For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS) Begun in 2008 as part of the MRIP, the voluntary FHTS collects fishing effort data from the for-hire fishing fleet (charter and head/party boats). A randomly chosen 10% of for-hire vessels are surveyed weekly from a coast-wide directory of eligible vessels, and Captains are asked to report trip & fishing effort information for the previous week. FHTS effort data is combined with APAIS data of for-hire fishing anglers to produce estimates of catch per trip by area for the for-hire fleet. *Conducted by ME DMR on behalf of NOAA Fisheries, May through October in Maine.*

LPS since 1992

Large Pelagic Intercept Survey (LPS) A dockside survey of private and charter boats that have just completed fishing trips directed at large pelagic species. This survey is conducted at public fishing access sites that are likely to be used by offshore anglers and is primarily designed to collect detailed catch data. *Conducted by ME DMR on behalf of NOAA Fisheries, July through October.*

Large Pelagic Telephone Survey (LPTS) A telephone survey in which a randomly chosen 10% of the federally permitted HMS fleet is contacted weekly and captains are asked to report detailed trip, fishing effort, & catch information for the previous week. *Conducted by ME DMR on behalf of NOAA Fisheries, June through October for boats with CH/HB HMS permit. ME boats holding other HMS category permits are surveyed by an outside NOAA Fisheries contractor.*

* Due to overlap of eligible vessels between LPTS and FHTS, the two surveys are conducted in tandem.

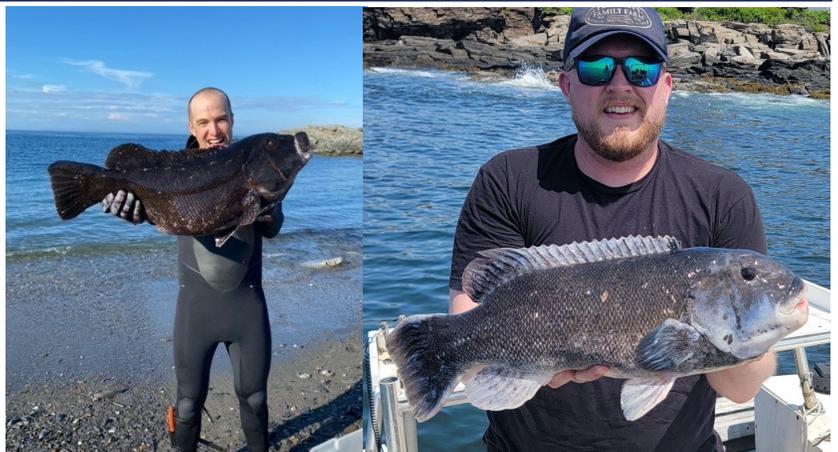
For additional information about MRIP surveys and Highly Migratory Species management information, visit the following NOAA Fisheries websites: MRIP www.countmyfish.noaa.gov, HMS www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/atlantic-highly-migratory-species.

Maine State Saltwater Game Fish Records

Two new state records were set in 2023:

- **Handline/speargun category:** Wesley Moseman (pictured left) with a 12.5 lbs tautog.
- **Rod and reel category:** Brian Boyt (pictured right) with a 7.825 lbs tautog.

Congratulations to our new record holders! To learn more about the State Records application process, please visit our website: <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/fisheries/recreational/>



Data collection results

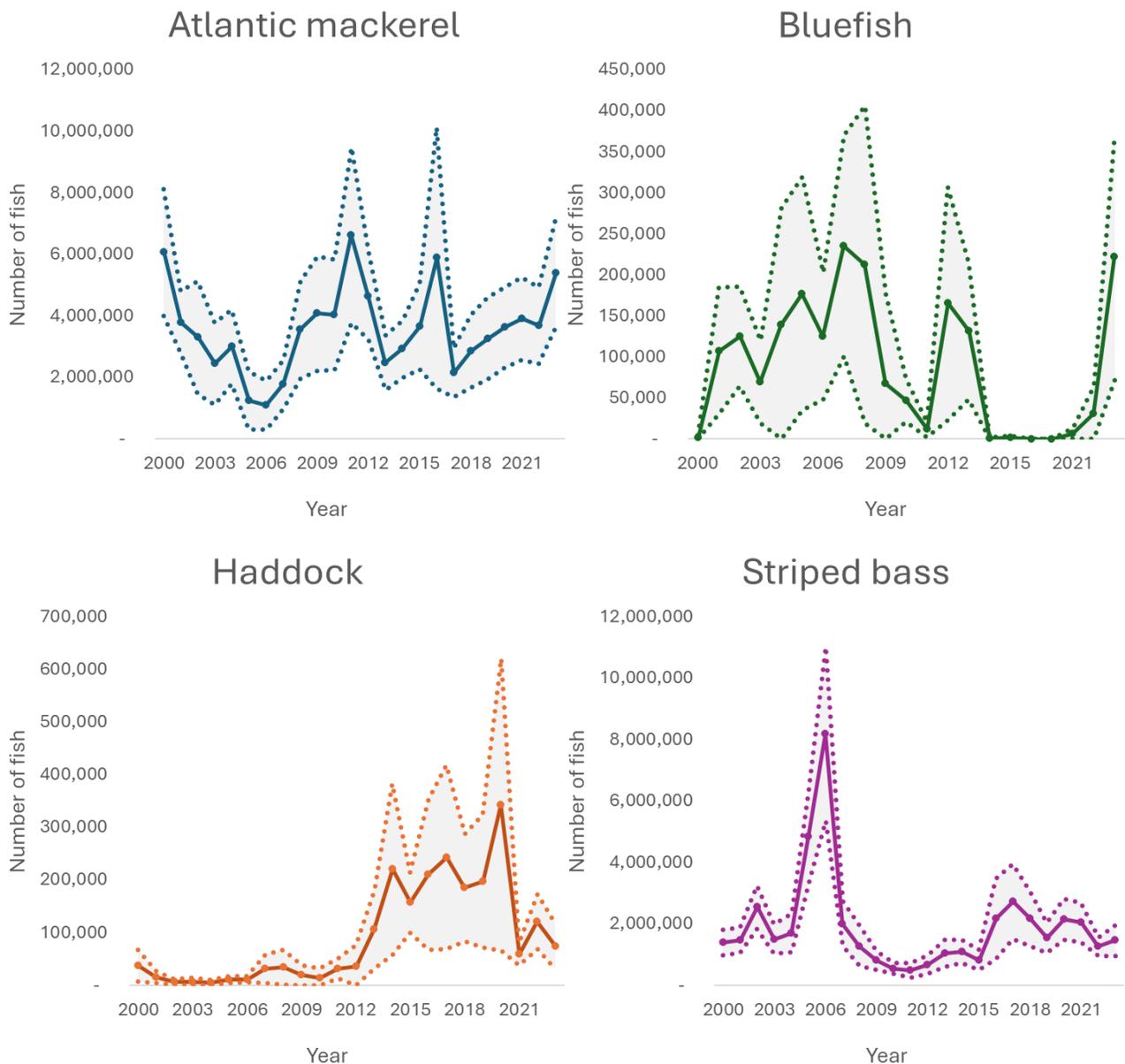
APAIS/LPS

The table below indicates the number of anglers interviewed for APAIS throughout the 2023 season. The graphs show fishing estimates for a few key species created from the data contributed by anglers in Maine.

Number of interviewed anglers from 2023 APAIS and LPS by month and mode.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
Charter boat anglers	0	29	46	36	23	5	139
Head boat anglers	5	31	5	0	16	15	72
Private boat anglers	150	170	232	129	55	19	755
Shore anglers	77	94	159	116	28	7	481
LPS interviews	LPS survey starts in July		13	23	9	3	48

Maine's total catch estimates (2000-2023).



Volunteer Angler Logbook program

2024 VOLUNTEER ANGLER LOGBOOK



The Volunteer Angler Logbook (VAL) program is primarily geared toward striped bass anglers, but it is open to anglers who fish for any saltwater species. The primary goal of the survey is to collect additional length, catch & effort data for striped bass. Indeed, our field staff sees a limited number of these fish each season due to size and bag limits for this species as well as anglers opting for catch and release. The VAL program is quite simple. An angler records information about fish harvested or released during each trip for themselves and any fishing companions, even if no fish were caught! The logbook is available in paper or electronic format. Please email chris.b.uraneck@maine.gov if you would like to learn more or sign up.

Preliminary summary of the 2023 data:

Effort data

39 logbook keepers reported 887 fishing trips which, when multiplied by the number of logbook keepers and their fishing companions, resulted in 1,371 individual angler-trips and over 3,900 angler-hours fished over the course of the season. 95% of trips (1301) targeted striped bass as the primary or secondary target.

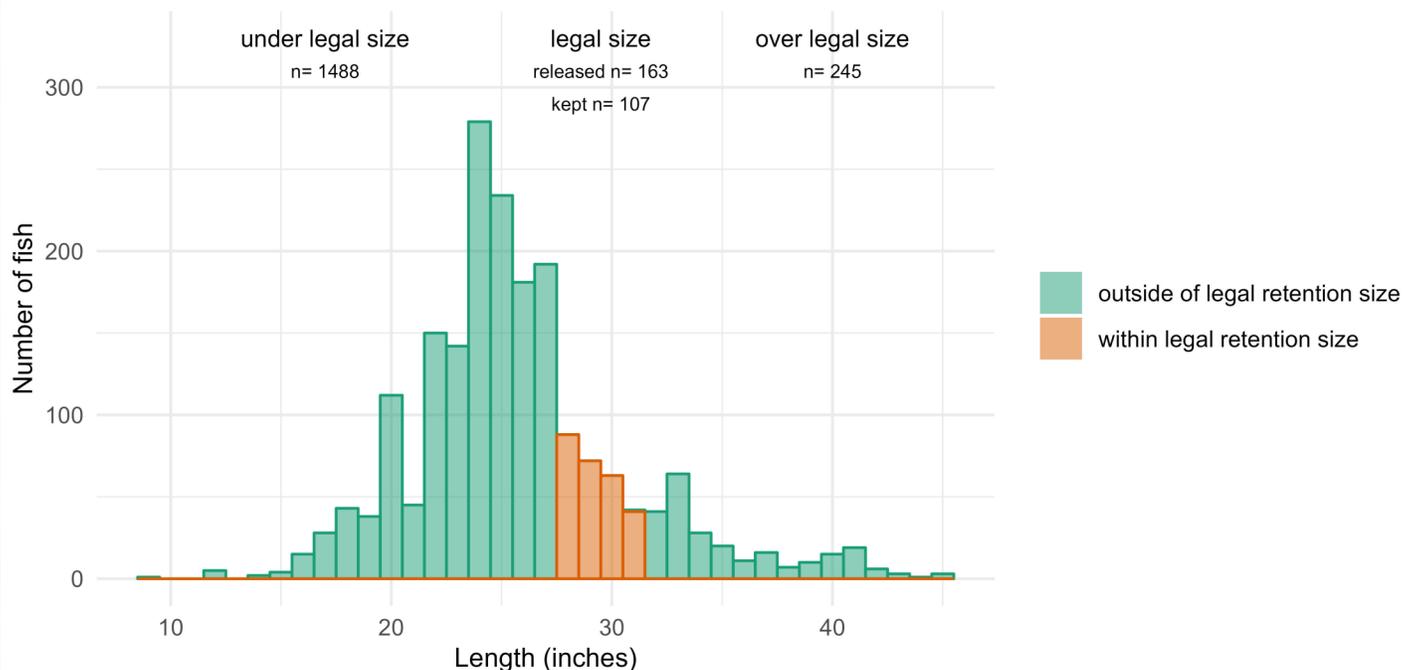
Catch data – striped bass

The catch rate for striped bass was about 0.54 sb/angler-hour on all trips with complete catch information (number of anglers and hours fishing) targeting striped bass as the primary or secondary target (1301 angler-trips). A total of 2,010 striped bass were caught on 543 trips. Of the 2,010 striped bass caught in 2023, 5% (107) were kept and 95% (1903) were released.

Length data – striped bass

2,003 (99.7%) striped bass had their length either estimated or measured. 13.5% (270) of the stripers (using both estimated and measured lengths) were between 28” and 31” (legal size). Of these, 40% (107) were kept, and 60% (163) were released. The average size for measured striped bass was 25.7”. The largest was 45” and the smallest was 9”. 87% (1,733) of the striped bass with estimated or measured lengths were not legal size.

2023 Maine Striped Bass Length Frequency (measured and estimated lengths)





Maine Tackle-Busters club

This "club" is an association of saltwater anglers who have landed a "BIG ONE" in Maine. Tackle Busters was established as a way to recognize saltwater anglers who have outstanding catches of particular fish, but do not qualify for state record. Anglers who wish to qualify for Tackle Busters but wish to release their fish unharmed may do so if the fish meets the minimum total length requirement. A photo of the fish beside a tape measure would provide the necessary verification of size.

2023 minimum qualifications

black sea bass	2 lbs.	porbeagle shark	200 lbs.
bluefin tuna	300 lbs.	redfish	2 lbs.
bluefish	15 lbs. or 36 inches	shad	21 inches
cusk	12 lbs.	striped bass	25 lbs. or 42 inches
haddock	7 lbs.	tautog	3 lbs.
halibut	50 lbs.	thresher shark	200 lbs.
mackerel	2 lbs.	white hake	25 lbs.
monkfish	20 lbs.	whiting (silver hake)	3 lbs.
pollock	25 lbs.	winter flounder	2 lbs.



2023 largest fish in each category

Species	# of Entries	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
bluefin tuna	1	434 lbs.	97 in.	Bill Woodward	-
cusk	1	12 lbs.	31.5 in.	Brian Plasse	10/12/2023
haddock	3	7.5 lbs.	27 in.	Tim Adams	5/30/2023
halibut	3	149.5 lbs.	65.5 in.	Jim Thurston	4/27/2023
porbeagle	2	213.25 lbs.	84 in.	Marissa Collins	4/06/2023
striped bass	2	32 lbs.	44 in.	Kyle Bianchi	7/22/2023
white hake	28	43 lbs.	49 in.	James Feeny	10/24/2023
whiting (silver)	4	5 lbs.	27 in.	Trey Shaw	6/20/2023



Thank you for reading! If you have any questions or would like to reach out, please email Chris Urameck at chris.b.uranek@maine.gov or Gabrielle Page at gabrielle.page@maine.gov. We wish you an excellent fishing season in 2024.