



# FY2010 Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Report

## Introduction

The South Carolina Recreational Fisheries License Program, since its inception in July 1992, has provided significant benefits to the state. Allocated funds continue to support programs, activities, and resource management functions that are of great value to the protection, maintenance, enhancement, and enjoyment of healthy and diverse marine recreational fisheries, associated fish stocks, and marine habitats. The original Marine Recreational Fishing Stamp program was modified in 2002 to give South Carolina resident and out-of-state anglers a variety of license options from which to choose. The modification has allowed for revenues to double, which provides additional support for activities important to state saltwater recreational anglers. Additional changes were made to the saltwater recreational fishing license in July 2009, requiring individuals recreationally fishing from the shore and those recreationally shrimping and crabbing to have saltwater recreational fishing licenses for the first time. These changes will help provide better information about recreational catch, which will lead to better management of SC's valuable marine resources.

Since the inception of the license, as of June 30, 2010, approximately 1,839,483 individual saltwater stamps/licenses have been sold to marine recreational anglers over the course of the program's existence. Since July 2009, 208,204 individual saltwater recreational licenses of all available types have been purchased, resulting in the generation of approximately \$2.14 million in total revenue, the vast majority of which by law must be used to benefit saltwater recreational fisheries. The following are highlights of the activities, projects, and programs carried out by the Marine Resources Division that received support from the Saltwater Recreational Fisheries License Program over this past fiscal year.

## FY 2010 Highlights

**Artificial Reefs** – Fourteen artificial reef construction projects were completed this fiscal year on 11 permitted reef sites encompassing every coastal county. These projects included the addition of 5 barges of various designs and sizes, 2 steel-hulled trawlers, 66 armored personnel carriers, and several sizes of concrete culvert pipe. Routine monitoring and assessment of reefs were conducted throughout the year, and 10 missing reef buoys were replaced on inshore and offshore reef sites. - \$150K

**Marine Fish** - SCDNR efforts to maintain high quality fishing opportunities include scientific surveys that monitor inshore fish populations, and angler-related programs that collect biological information on recreationally caught fish. The inshore surveys use several types of fishing gear (electrofishing, trammel nets and long-lines) so that different habitats and life stages can be monitored (juveniles through adults). Most fish are released alive after being identified, counted, and measured, and some species are tagged so their movements can be followed. A small number of fish are kept so that samples can be taken for assessing their age and reproductive condition. SCDNR fisheries biologists also visit fishing tournaments and manage drop-off freezers, where participating anglers can donate fish carcasses for scientific study. Over the last year SCDNR inshore fisheries biologists made over 1,500 sets of survey gear up and down the SC coast and visited 11 tournaments. During this work, they encountered almost 55,000 fish belonging to over 100 species. Approximately 3,000 fish were tagged and 800 recaptures were reported by SCDNR biologists or anglers.

Saltwater recreational fishing license revenue also helps SCDNR collect information from recreational fishermen through the State Finfish Survey (SFS) and the charter boat logbook program. The SFS interviews fishermen at public boat landings while the charter boat logbook program collects catch and effort data from vessels carrying fishermen on a for-hire basis. These data help determine the components of the stock that are being targeted by recreational anglers as well as recreational fishing effort and behavior. During FY2010 1,647 SFS interviews were conducted in which staff measured over 3,600 fish specimens comprising 42 species. During the last calendar year over 9,000 charter boat trips with an average of 3.4 anglers per trip were reported through the charter boat logbook program.

SCDNR's finfish stocking research program is also funded in part by saltwater fishing license revenues. Adult wild fish maintained in the lab are conditioned to spawn, fertilized eggs are collected and the larvae are then carefully maintained in ponds. All 'families' produced at the Waddell Mariculture Center have a unique

genotype or "genetic fingerprint" so that they can later be distinguished from their wild cohorts. When the fish held in ponds grow to the desired length, they are harvested and transported to stocking sites along the coast. During FY2010, 33,239,479 red drum and 1,446 cobia were released as part of a license funded project. Specifically, 1,101,297 fingerling red drum (1-1.5 inches) were stocked in the Colleton and Ashley rivers; 32,136,182 larvae were stocked in the Ashley River; and 2,000 total sub-adults were stocked into Winyah Bay, Murrells Inlet, Cherry Grove and the Ashley River. Cobia production included 1,392 medium (9 inches) and 54 large juveniles (21 inches) which were all stocked in the Broad River. For both species, genetic techniques using non-lethal sampling allow hatchery fish to be identified from their wild cohorts by having anglers remove a small tissue sample before releasing the fish. This allows scientists to determine the percent contribution stocked fish are making to the overall population in various estuarine systems. During FY2010, 1,593 red drum and cobia samples were processed by the genetics lab.

A Marine Recreational Fisheries survey to collect information on the behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of shore-based fishermen was also funded through license revenue as well as a project focused on examining the needs of shore-based anglers and developing ways to improve shore-based fishing access. - \$808.5K

**Oysters** - Over 21,762 bushels of shell were planted on 4 public and state shellfish grounds in 2 coastal counties during FY2010. Twenty shell recycling sites, located throughout the coastal zone, continue to serve as collection points for donated shell, allowing the public to participate in oyster reef restoration and enhancement in recreational harvesting areas. A record 20,710 bushels of oyster shells was recycled in FY2010, a 35% increase from 2009. SCDNR biologists continued to update shellfish ground maps using aerial imagery collected over recent years combined with on-the-ground assessments. Imagery is available online at <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/GIS/descosterbed.html>. Hard copy maps are available to the public free of charge by writing: Recreational Shellfish Maps, Shellfish Management Program, SCDNR, P.O. Box 12559, Charleston, SC 29442-2559 or by calling (843) 953-9854, and pdf versions are available at the SCDNR Web site ([www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov)); click on "Marine", then "Shellfish", then look for the quick link to maps for state or public shellfish grounds. - \$181.6K

**Education, Information, Outreach** - The public recreational tagging program, while still maintaining a small tagging contingent, has been successfully utilized as an outreach tool for communicating with recreational anglers and promoting resource stewardship. A technical report was recently completed summarizing program results from 1978 through 2009 and is available on the SCDNR website. Last year, trained volunteer anglers tagged and released 476 fish. Information was received from 98 recaptured fish and 87% of those recaptured were released with the tag intact. 305 of the fish tagged (64%) and released were red drum. With license funds, public information material including rules and regulations books, tide tables, fish rulers and fish identification posters were printed and made available to the public through the Coastal Information Distribution System. The saltwater license website ([saltwaterfishing.sc.gov](http://saltwaterfishing.sc.gov)) continues to provide the public with updated information on rules and regulations, saltwater fishing related news, and informational material on fish identification, fish measuring, and best angling practices. The Carolina Coastal Discovery (CCD) Marine Education Program provides vessel and land based education activities operating out of the Marine Resources Center in Charleston, DNR facilities in the Ashepoo-Combahee-Edisto (ACE) Basin, and in Georgetown and Horry Counties. Reaching about 3,500 students, teachers, and adults with education programs during FY2010, the CCD Program's education initiatives included marine animal dissections, salt marsh ecology, marine invertebrate taxonomy, barrier island studies, beach walks, bird and estuarine species identifications, and water quality monitoring. CCD Program information and application forms are now available online at [www.dnr.sc.gov/ccd/](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/ccd/) - \$120K

**Infrastructure Support For Marine Division** – Funds were allocated to provide general infrastructure support for the marine recreational fisheries programs. These funds help support maintenance and operation of support facilities at the Marine Resources Center in Charleston, the McKenzie Field Station at Bennett's Point and the Waddell Mariculture Center in Bluffton. These funds help purchase or maintain laboratory equipment, fish holding tanks and ponds, sampling boats and vehicles. - \$250K