

FY 2013 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, 2013, **2,504,633** individual saltwater stamps/licenses have been sold to marine recreational anglers over the course of the program's existence. Since July 2012, 223,273 individual saltwater recreational licenses of all available types have been purchased, resulting in the generation of approximately **\$2.34 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 2013 Highlights

- **Artificial Reefs** – Twelve [artificial reef construction](#) projects were completed this fiscal year on 12 permitted reef sites encompassing every coastal county. These projects included the addition of 330 concrete culvert pipes, 80 concrete cones, 2 memorial statues, and 100 tons of additional miscellaneous concrete material. Routine monitoring and assessment of reefs were conducted throughout the year, and 11 missing reef buoys were replaced on inshore and offshore reef sites. A program to enhance shore-based fishing access produced two new public fishing piers by partnering with county governments – Knowles Island Fishing Pier in Jasper County and Steamboat Landing fishing pier in Charleston County - \$412K
- **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 1,739 sets of survey gear up and down the SC coast and visited and collected fish at numerous tournaments. During this work, they encountered almost 44,294 fish belonging to over 100 species. Approximately 2,386 fish were tagged and 563 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 2,070 interviews were conducted in which staff measured 2599 fish specimens comprising 41 species. During the last calendar year over 12,000 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 FY 2013, 591,387 red drum, 520,291 spotted seatrout, and 25,001 striped bass were released as part of a license funded project. Specifically, red drum fingerlings stockings were 223,798 in the North Edisto River, 148,787 in Winyah Bay, and 218,802 in Broad River. Spotted seatrout stockings were 114,662 in the Wando River, 340,762 in Charleston Harbor and 64,867 in Ashley River. All striped bass were released into the Ashley River. For all three species, genetic techniques using non-lethal sampling allows 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 FY2013, 3,230 red drum, spotted seatrout, striped bass, cobia and red snapper 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. - \$958K

- **Oysters** - Approximately 34,400 bushels of shell were planted on 4 public and state shellfish grounds in 2 coastal counties during FY2013. Twenty-nine [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 23,802 bushels of oyster shells were recycled in

FY2013. 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/descoysterbed.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 of the maps are available at the SCDNR Web site for [state shellfish grounds](#) or [public shellfish grounds](#). - \$301K

- **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. 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) 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 4,000 students, teachers, and adults with education programs during FY2013, 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/ - \$324K
- **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. - \$631K

The [FY 2013 Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Report](#) above is provided in Adobe® Acrobat® (PDF) format. Adobe® Reader® is required to open these files and is available as a [free download](#) from the Adobe® Web site.