NASEM – MRIP Data Standards Review

June 26, 2025

Harry Blanchet, Biologist
La. Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries

A bit of background:
LA Creel

Background of LA Creel

Issues with Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) previous (CHTS-APHIS) landings estimation method:

- Inability to reliably estimate landings at a basin or sub-state level.
- Insufficient sample size (catch per unit effort, size frequency, lack of age data, etc.).
- Imprecise landings estimates for many species, in particular offshore species.
- Landings estimates not timely enough to monitor in-season quotas.
- Note: Implementation of FES was independent of our decision.

LDWF needed more precise, real-time, localized data to better manage our state fisheries. State tried to work with NOAA to enhance MRIP to provide this level of data, eventually we developed Louisiana's own state survey.

Designed as complemented surveys, similar to MRIP.

Note: Development preceded NOAA's policy documents (e.g. 04-114) that could have greatly extended the development time-line for this new survey.

Current Status of LA Creel

MRIP certified

- Weekly estimates of harvest by basin and mode (private boat, shore, charter)
- Near-real-time tracking of private boat and state-permitted charter boat harvest of red snapper for quota monitoring, https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/red-snapper
- Overall data available on website approximately one month after the final day of the queried month https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/la-creel-data-query
- Detail and summary information provided to GSMFC FIN program through cooperative agreement.
- Continues to work with NOAA to explain sampling design, data structure, available information, etc.

LA Creel Landings and Effort Data

LA Creel estimates are available on the department website or through data management by request.

https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/lacreel

Query Type	Date Range	Month Selected	Fishing Activity	Fishing Area	Species:
Harvest	2018 - 2024	Annual (All Months Combined)	All Activity Combined	Statewide (All Basins Combined)	Spotted Seatrout

EXPORT NEW QUERY

Drag a column header here to group by that column

Year	Species Common Name	Landings (# of fish)	RSE
2018	Spotted Seatrout	2,577,106	6
2019	Spotted Seatrout	3,541,643	5
2020	Spotted Seatrout	3,861,698	5
2021	Spotted Seatrout	2,933,215	6
2022	Spotted Seatrout	2,918,217	5
2023	Spotted Seatrout	2,808,743	7
2024	Spotted Seatrout	2,817,855	6

Query Type	Date Range	Month Selected	Fishing Activity	Fishing Area
Effort	2018 - 2024	Annual (All Months Combined)	All Activity Combined	Statewide (All Basins Combined)

EXPORT NEW QUERY

Drag a column header here to group by that column

Year	Effort (Angler trips)	RSE
2018	2,275,950	3
2019	2,108,454	3
2020	2,505,128	3
2021	1,887,859	4
2022	1,609,250	3
2023	1,757,820	4
2024	1,677,877	4

Biological Sampling

Not part of LA Creel program

Some sampling for age, length and sex occurs during LA Creel sampling

Traceability to sample origin is maintained.

Biological Sampling Program also provides age, length, sex and other biological information for other Departmental sampling programs, including commercial harvest sampling and fishery-independent sampling.

Fishery-dependent data provided to GSMFC FIN program.

Relationship to NOAA Data Standards

Development of program preceded data standards policies, but was also independent of NOAA processes. LA Creel was intended to be a focused, simple sampling program to provide estimates of harvest.

LDWF worked with NOAA S&T to provide opportunity for external review of program, developed modifications to the program in response to that review, and was eventually certified by NOAA.

NOAA Standards –
A field biologist's perspective

NOAA Data Standards: are needed

NOAA needs to cooperate with a large number of outside agencies to fulfil its mission

Insert Herding Cats Image

NOAA also needs to communicate to its users how it develops, reviews, and uses data it collects

Data standards help both of those needs

BUT:

Standards can be unnecessarily proscriptive in practice.

Standards can hinder development or use of otherwise useful data.

Standards can be used to protect existing programs.

Standards can be expensive to implement.

Existing Data Standards

Show signs of evolving (in a good way)

Still have onerous requirements.

Can be used to press State or other programs to create additional data fields or processes that are unrelated to the purpose of that program, and do not enhance the ability of the State program to fulfil its goal.

Show signs of evolving (in a good way)

An example:

Under a prior version of standard 5.2.4, LA was pressed to develop a tracking log for all edits to the raw electronic data.

The current version of 5.2.4 does not refer to error tracking logs, so additional methods of understanding changes to electronic datasets can be used.

However, in the NOAA review of the most recent LA Creel annual report, just such a tabular summary was requested. A table is not the only method to report changes.

LA has a process for documenting changes, and that includes both electronic and physical (paper) corrections. However, we do not have data fields to flag edits.

Still have onerous requirements

Annual reports are required of all programs. These can be useful, but are yet one more report that needs to be generated. The reports should be less voluminous after year-1.

Much of the material in the annual reports is also available in the protocol documents developed for each survey. While it may be useful for the few readers of the annual reports who are not aware of the protocol documentation, it added burden to the reporting agencies to develop the report with that information. And it adds bulk to all later annual reports, which also makes it more difficult for a casual reader to recognize changes.

Annual reports after the initial one should be limited to updated tables, discussion of issues confronted during the year, and resolution of any requiring adjustments to the program (immediate or ongoing).

Leverage on programs to create additional data fields or processes

While not specified in the Standards, Louisiana has been requested to modify our LA Creel survey to include additional information.

Standard 6.2 – requires reporting of “deficiencies that require unanticipated design modifications” “as soon as possible”

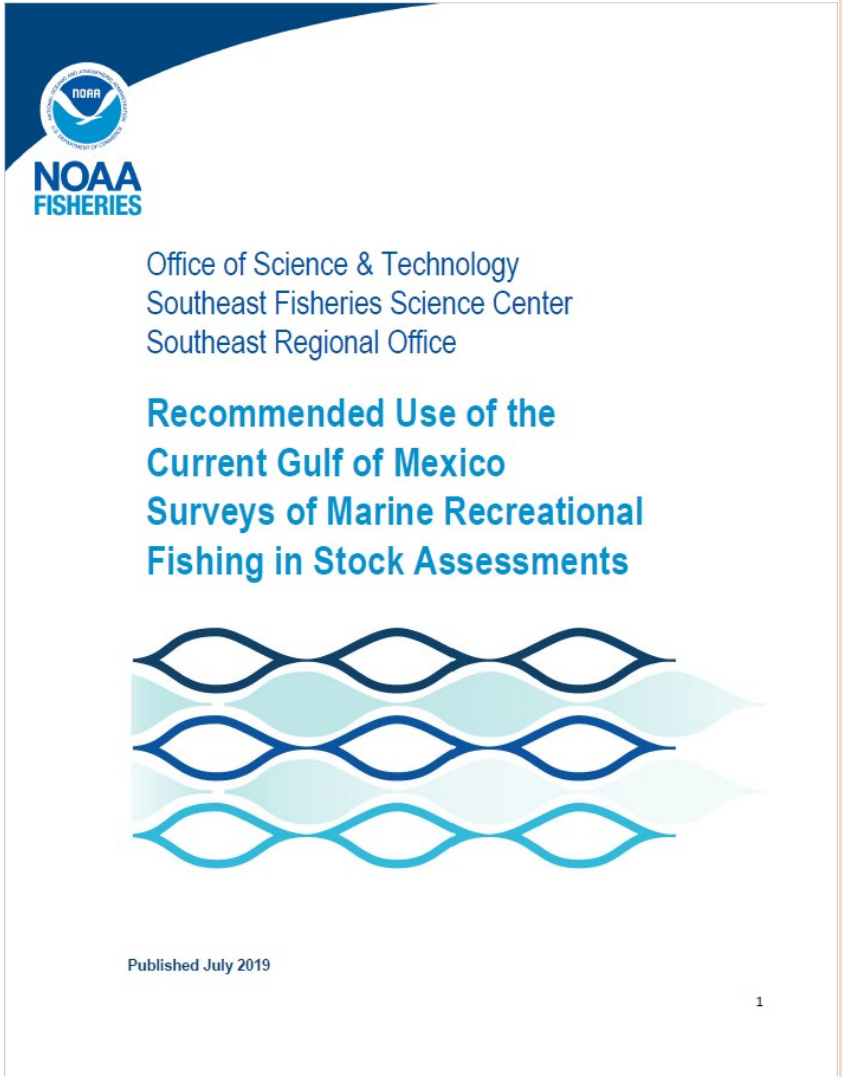
Deficiencies happen all the time, especially minor ones. As an example, natural or manmade disasters can affect the abilities of field surveyors (and anglers) to access sites. This reporting requirement adds a layer of review that will delay implementation of response.

With weekly sampling schedules and estimate production, it is necessary to be able to respond quickly to events in order to have robust estimates of harvest.

Use Existing Information

NOAA may not use available information when developing requirements or policy decisions.

Example: 2019 “White Paper” had several factual errors on LA Creel methodology, though the agency had extensive documentation on those processes from the recent NOAA-facilitated peer review and certification of the program.



NOAA FISHERIES

Office of Science & Technology
Southeast Fisheries Science Center
Southeast Regional Office

Recommended Use of the Current Gulf of Mexico Surveys of Marine Recreational Fishing in Stock Assessments

Published July 2019

1

General Notes on Standards

Standards reference several TOR documents for MRIP management groups. Thus, not all sources of leverage on State or other programs is apparent in reviewing the Standards themselves.

Much of the information on Standard 7.5 seems to be broader than the Recreational Fishing Survey Standards themselves – NOAA based rather than within MRIP. Not sure if those were part of the review.

One of the 3 links in Standard “7.5.2: Access” was not available from the links on the Fishing Survey and Data Standards page.

Use of existing FIN committees for Regional Implementation Teams is a good use of an existing, functioning network of experts to assist in coordination efforts.

General Notes on Standards

One concern I have is that review of these standards is a method of validation for anything not addressed. If current practice allows a waiver of a given standard, and that is not brought up in the review, then it could be taken as endorsement of the standard as written. And then more pressure to implement those standards as written. Not as currently implemented.

There should be evaluation of any such waivers, to see if the standard practice being waived is really necessary, or if the existing information stream or implemented practice is sufficient for the purpose.

General Notes on Standards

Finally, the existing standards can act as a barrier to entry for new initiatives.

Many of these standards would be a challenge for a University, State, or contract researcher working on NOAA projects. I would hope to see a set of standards that achieve the needs of NOAA, but allow more broad participation.

Questions?