

STATISTICS REVIEW (from page 25)

With MRIP using an angler registration the universe will be much smaller, basically being the households where a recreational fisher resides. This will yield much more useable data for the same amount of telephone survey time and should lower the variance because the prevalence (as described above) will be much closer to 1.0 (actually roughly 0.2 to 0.5 depending on how many license holders are fishing that two-month wave) and the total number of households will be a much smaller number (maybe 80,000 rather than 416,500 as described above).

For this reason, the angler registration will improve one portion of the survey designed to estimate effort, but will not eliminate the other issues discussed above unless other changes are made. MRIP will include other improvements not discussed here.

If you have a headache I apologize, but think of how I felt after spending two days looking at and talking about these numbers day and night! I will tell you that there are many subtleties about the survey methods and some of them may generate random error in the data summaries while some may generate a systematic error or "bias" in the data summaries.

In any case there are a few general things that must be considered when using these data to make management decisions:

1. When NOAA reports this information they generally include the "percent standard error" (PSE) with the information. This PSE is a measure of how tight the people at NOAA think the data are. If the PSE is low (below about 10%) then the data are pretty good, but if the PSE is over about 30% the data is not very reliable according to NOAA.
2. The more specific we try to get – for example trying to look at catch in the spring versus the entire year for just one

species, in one state, the higher the PSE and therefore the less we should be relying upon the data to make management decisions.

3. The less data we have for a particular species or particular mode, the higher the PSE and the less useable the data.

4. The more intercepts we can include in the data, the better the reliability of the data in general and the lower the PSE will be.

5. The MRIP data should be better than the current MRFSS data because the PSE on the estimate of "effort" should decrease therefore all catch and harvest data will have lower PSE.

6. Managers should be very cautious of possible sample "bias." Since "bias" is systematic error in the data it actually moves the estimated conclusion in one direction away from the true condition being estimated.

This is much more of a concern than random error, since it systematically moves the conclusion from the data away from the truth. An example of this would be if bluefish were mostly caught at night and there were no intercepts taken at night, then the conclusions regarding the total bluefish catch would be biased low and more sampling would never improve the bias unless it included the appropriate level of night intercepts.

Well, thank you for reading. You deserve a medal if you understand the entire thing the first time through. Get in touch with me directly via email (Hittinger@risaa.org) or talk to me at one of the monthly seminars if you want to discuss this in more detail. I have a one inch thick book from the workshop that just skims the surface of this program. You can also get more information at

<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/index.html>




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