

Summary

50 years ago, sport fishing on the Island was somewhat experimental. It was unknown if our waters were suitable for the development of sport fishing. The interest of a few recreational fishermen prompted the government to do some research on the potential of sport fishing for Puerto Rico. The results came quickly and these revealed the great potential that sport fishing had for Puerto Rico. Scientists took advantage of that interest, and since then fishing tournaments have been used as a source of information on the species. Scientists identified species, studied their age and growth patterns, reproduction and other aspects, and monitored these events to help characterize deep-sea fishing in Puerto Rico. This aided in the establishment of fishing clubs around the Island and tournaments began to be held to land these big fish that inhabit our waters. Over time, the preferences of the anglers changed, and many of these adjustments were due to changes in the regulations applied to some species that are important to the sport but showed signs of overfishing. Those regulations allow the tradition of tournaments to continue, while protecting the resource. All activities related to recreational and sport fishing on the island are managed in state waters under the Puerto Rico Fisheries Law No. 278 and the Fisheries Regulation No.7949. Some of these practices are also under federal jurisdiction detailed in the Code of Federal Regulations (§50CFR 622). These documents establish the necessary management measures for the protection of the island's fishery resources. The documents include applicable permits and licenses, bag limits, gear and other management measures for recreational angling. recreational anglers.

In addition to the work under this program, our personnel have collaborated and participated in studies such as: **The characterization of highly migratory species fishing** and studies that will allow us to know the actual socio-economic impact of marine recreational fishing on the Island.

This inter-agency effort between the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Service Sportfish Restoration Program constitutes one of the best tools around that will help assure the best management of the island's fisheries resources.

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Approved by the Puerto Rico State on Elections Commission

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Puerto Rico Marine Recreational Fishing Program

Puerto Rico Marine Recreational Fishing Tournaments 2000-2013



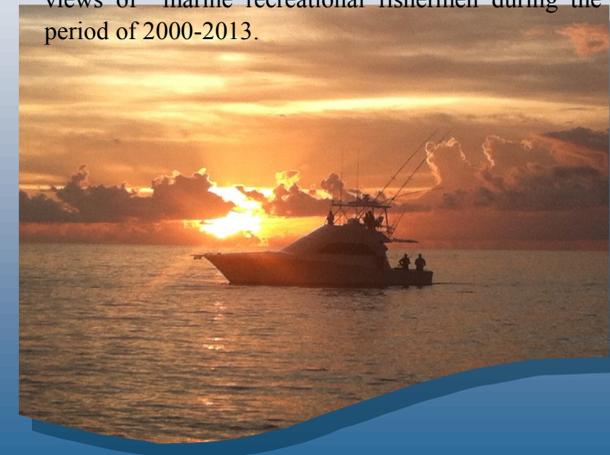
The Marine Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) began in Puerto Rico in 1999 as an effort to monitor marine recreational fishing on the Island. To cover all aspects of recreational fishing, the program was then divided into two main components: first the evaluation of 3 modes of marine recreational fishing (shore, private boat and charter boat fishing) and second, the monitoring and evaluation of marine recreational fishing tournaments. In the first component, fishermen are interviewed and the following information is collected: catch, fish identification, length and weight of harvested fish, fishing effort, location, bait, gear and socioeconomic information (place of residence, target species, expenses during the fishing trip, etc.)

In tournament monitoring; our personnel visit clubs and marinas to collect biometrical information as well as information on tagged/ released or lost fish and information on angler participation and effort at these events. The events in this group are unique due to the fact that anglers compete for prizes for their catch or releases.

These events target mostly pelagic species such as Dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*), Blue Marlin (*Makaira nigricans*), Sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) and Wahoo (*Acanthobium solandri*) among others., although some tournaments are in shoreline mode or from kayaks.

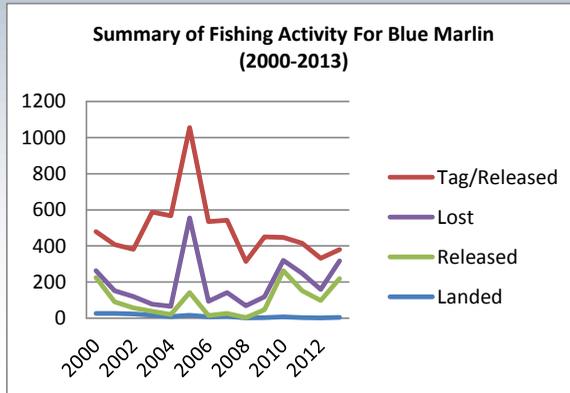
When combined with the information provided by the angler interviews, we have a better perspective on marine recreational fishing in Puerto Rico.

This brochure summarizes findings from the interviews of marine recreational fishermen during the period of 2000-2013.



Annually, an average of 33 marine fishing tournaments are held on the Island. In these events, information on the harvest (weights and lengths) and related biostatistical information is collected. The most common tournament modes are shore, tournaments for highly migratory species, tarpon, bottom fishing, and kayak fishing among others. All the action and the thrill of the chase of capturing trophy size fish motivates anglers to start participating in these competitive events. Many recreational fishermen from the Island are well known due to their captures. In addition, many anglers have helped to change the mentality of landing fish to release these majestic animals. Even so, these events attract many spectators that admire these captures even when only photos are provided. In some events fish captured are considered bycatch. This means that these will not obtain any points for prizes, but data regarding all landings is recorded by our personnel. This means that everything that comes to the pier is measured and weighed. Released fish

Without a doubt, events that target Blue Marlin are among the most important on the Island. It was actually what made Puerto Rico for its potential in sport fishing particularly to billfishes. By 2005, the practice of catching and releasing fish had reached popularity and landed fish became fewer as more fishermen released their captures. However, these are the events with the most participation. This species is under state and federal regulations.



Following Blue Marlin, the second most important species in fishing tournaments is the dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*). Tournaments are held throughout the island making it the leader in harvested pounds in these events. A total of 105 dolphinfish tournaments have been monitored, and in these events approximately 250,671.6 pounds were harvested (an average of 17,905 pounds annually) only in events covered by our personnel.

Dolphinfish are landed year round in the Island, with peaks in harvests from Jan-April. Due to its importance for both commercial and recreational fishermen, dolphinfish fishing is regulated under the Puerto Rico Fisheries Regulation 7949, which establishes management measures that help to protect the fishery resource. When we combine this data with other scientific information we can have management suitable for our particular resources.

Tournament Type	Events	Landed fish	Total harvest (pounds)
Blue Marlin	180	157	60,936.63
Dolphinfish	105	17,086	250,671.6
Dolphinfish/Wahoo	17	*	*
Sailfish	26	20	545.66
Sailfish/Wahoo	5	*	*
Wahoo	19	1345	21,115.2
Kayak fishing	10	135	215.6
Bottom fishing	14	3574	7216
Tarpon	14	-	-
Shore	28	2533	3227.4

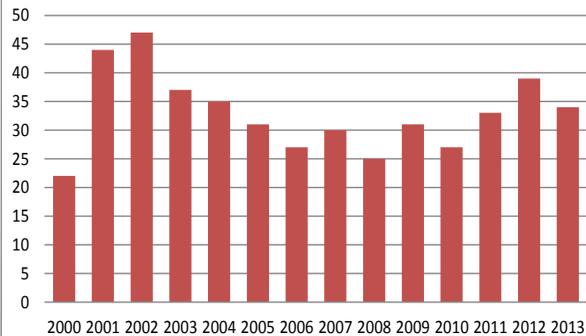
*total harvest includes all fish landed even when these were landed as bycatch (no prizes or points awarded)

There are many laws and regulations that oversee marine events including tournament activities. These events are evaluated by the DNER Boating Commissioner's Office and permits are then awarded. This is done in order to have knowledge of activities and coordinate these to ensure the safety of the participants and spectators. Every group or organization that plans any kind of marine event has to apply for the permits and submit the required documents 60 days prior to the event. Recreational fishing activities are administered by the Puerto Rico Fishing Law (Law 278) and the Fisheries Regulation 7949.

This publication was prepared for informational use. All regulations mentioned are subject to modifications. To view current regulations and additional information go to:

- PRDNER: www.drna.gobierno.pr
- Caribbean Fisheries Management Council: www.caribbeanfmc.com
- National Marine Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Events monitored 2000-2013



Thanks to all recreational anglers for your participation and cooperation in this endeavor.