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Recreational Fishing License Sales in Florida: 1990-2000¹

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Introduction

The recreational fishing industry is an important natural resource-based industry in Florida. The tradition of recreational fishing is intrinsically linked with Florida's identity, whether it is bass fishing in the Chain of Lakes region or fishing from a charter boat in the Florida Keys. The number of saltwater anglers in Florida exceeds that of any other state in the nation (United States Department of Commerce, NMFS). During 1999, an estimated 2.4 million anglers went on 19.5 million saltwater recreational fishing trips. These anglers harvested 60 million saltwater fish, while an additional 75 million fish were caught and released. In addition, Florida ranks eighth among all states in terms of the number of freshwater anglers. During 1996 (the most recent data available), a total of 1.1 million anglers engaged in freshwater fishing activities in Florida, spending 18.4 million days fishing while taking 16.5 million freshwater fishing trips (United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service).

The various economic activities associated with recreational fishing in Florida generate considerable contributions to Florida's economy. Individuals engaged in recreational fishing purchase a wide variety of fishing gear and supplies, including everything from fishing tackle to fishing boats.

Expenditures associated with a given trip include bait, lodging, fuel, and clothing. These expenditures are made by both resident and non-resident anglers. The latter group contributes true economic impact to the Florida economy by bringing new money into the state. The freshwater recreational fishing industry is estimated to generate approximately \$1 billion in economic activity to the Florida economy, while creating 18,729 jobs throughout the state. The saltwater recreational industry is much larger, generating \$4.7 billion in economic activity while creating 56,270 jobs.

The state of Florida has required the purchase of freshwater fishing licenses for many years. Licenses are currently required for residents and non-residents fishing in freshwater or saltwater. However the saltwater fishing license is a relatively new requirement, having been implemented in 1989. With several exceptions such as fishing from shore or bridge/pier, anyone engaging in recreational saltwater angling must have a saltwater fishing license. This applies to both Florida residents and non-residents. The purpose of this publication is to briefly document the trends in recreational fishing license sales in Florida. License sales data used in the analysis were obtained from the Bureau of Licensing and Permitting, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC).

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Trends in License Sales

During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, a total of 1,532,000 fishing licenses were sold in Florida. The total value of license sales to the FFWCC during that period was \$19.6 million. Of this amount, \$7.7 million were associated with non-resident license sales, while \$11.9 million were attributed to resident license sales. Disaggregated another way, \$12.2 million were generated by saltwater license sales, while the remaining \$7.4 million was generated by freshwater license sales.

Saltwater License Sales

Sales of both resident and non-resident saltwater licenses have followed an upward trend over the last 10 years (Figure 1). Florida offers a 12-month resident saltwater license, and 12-month, 7-day, and 3-day non-resident saltwater licenses. Sales of resident saltwater licenses increased from 513,000 units during the 1990-1991 fiscal year to 602,000 units during 1999-2000. Non-resident saltwater license sales have also followed an upward trend over the last 10 years, increasing from 270,000 units in 1990-1991 to 404,000 units during 1999-2000. This represents an increase of 50%, a much more dramatic increase than exhibited by the 17% increase in resident saltwater license sales over the same period.

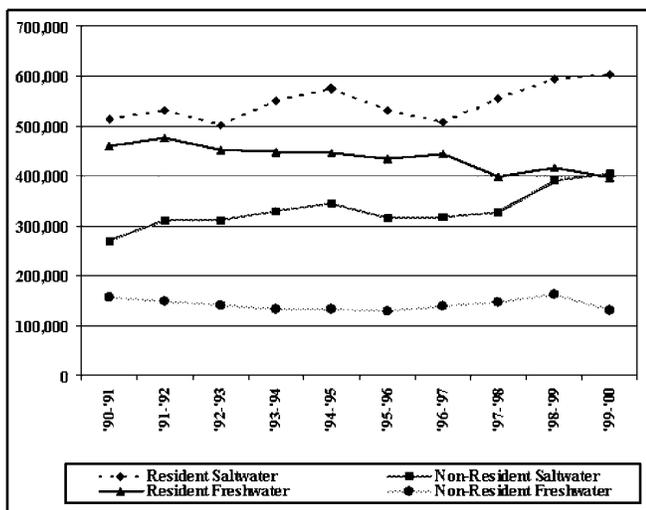


Figure 1. Ten-year trends for recreational fishing license units sold in Florida.

Freshwater License Sales

Sales of resident and non-resident freshwater licenses have exhibited divergent trends during the 10-year period from 1990-1991 to 1999-2000 (Figure 1). Unit sales of resident freshwater licenses have decreased from 459,000 units in 1990-1991 to 396,000 units in 1999-2000. This represents a 14% decrease over the 10-year period. Non-resident freshwater license sales have remained steady. Unit sales of non-resident freshwater licenses decreased from 158,000 units in 1990-1991 to 129,000 units in 1995-1996, then increased to 163,000 units in 1998-1999, only to decrease yet again to a 10-year low of 131,000 units in 1999-2000.

Unit Sales by County

Sales of recreational fishing licenses vary considerably from county to county in Florida. And as expected, sales of saltwater licenses are highest in coastal counties, while freshwater license sales are dominated by sales in the inland counties, with a few notable exceptions. The top ten counties in terms of resident saltwater license sales (revenue and units) during 1999-2000 are shown in Tables 1 through 4. Note that the counties are ranked based on revenue, not unit sales, although both data series are shown. Given that there are non-resident licenses of different duration and price, the rank ordering of the top ten counties by units sold for non-resident licenses may not mirror the ordering based on revenue (i.e., relatively more units of the lesser valued, short-term licenses may have been sold).

Resident Saltwater Licenses

The top ten counties in terms of resident saltwater license revenue are shown in Table 1. Since there is only one type of resident saltwater license, counties have the same ranking either by revenue or units sold. Monroe County led the state with \$401,884 (33,487 units sold). Note that all of the counties are coastal, and six of the counties are located on the east coast (Monroe County is considered a west coast county in terms of state and federal fisheries management). None of the counties are located in the Panhandle region of Florida. These top ten counties represent 46% of the total revenue generated by resident saltwater license sales in Florida.

Non-Resident Saltwater Licenses

The top ten counties in terms of non-resident license revenue are shown in Table 2. Again, Monroe County led the state in non-resident saltwater license sales, with \$599,140 (45,543 units sold). These values exceed resident saltwater licenses both in terms of revenue and units sold by almost 50%, emphasizing the importance of the tourist industry to Monroe County's recreational fishing industry. Again, all of the top ten counties are coastal. However, all ten of the counties are located on the west coast. Three of the counties are located in the Panhandle region of the state. These top ten counties represent 71% of the total revenue generated by non-resident saltwater license sales in Florida.

Resident Freshwater Licenses

The top ten counties in terms of resident freshwater license revenue are shown in Table 3. The rank ordering on the basis of revenue and units sold are identical. Polk County led the state in terms of resident freshwater license sales, with \$322,056 (26,838 units sold).

In contrast to the saltwater licenses sales, only five of the top ten counties are coastal, with most counties located in the central Florida region. A notable exception is Broward County. These top ten counties represent 51% of the total revenue generated by resident freshwater license sales in Florida.

Non-Resident Freshwater Licenses

The top ten counties in terms of non-resident freshwater fishing licenses are shown in Table 4. Okeechobee County is the most important county, with non-resident license sales of \$319,470 (14,724 units sold). Of the top ten counties, only one is a coastal county. And with the exception of Marion and Putnam Counties, all the remaining counties are located in the south central Florida region. These top ten counties represent 54% of the total revenue generated by non-resident freshwater license sales in Florida.

Conclusion

The recreational fishing industry generates considerable economic activity in the Florida economy. Approximately \$5.7 billion in economic activity and 75,000 jobs result from this important natural resource-based industry. Sales of 1.5 million recreational fishing licenses during the 1999-2000 fiscal year generated \$19.6 million in revenue for the FFWCC. The majority of the saltwater licenses were sold in coastal counties, primarily in south Florida, while inland counties in the south central region of the state accounted for the majority of freshwater fishing licenses. Sales of non-resident recreational fishing licenses (\$7.7 million) represent 40% of the total recreational fishing revenue and provide some insight into the importance of angling by tourists in Florida.

References

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Recreational Fishing License Sales in Florida: 1990-2000

Table 1. Top ten counties: resident saltwater fishing license sales, 1999-2000 fiscal year.

Rank	Florida Counties	Resident Saltwater Fishing License Revenue (\$)	Units
1	Monroe	401,844	33,487
2	Dade	393,384	32,782
3	Pinellas	392,676	32,723
4	Hillsborough	374,316	31,193
5	Duval	340,908	28,409
6	Broward	335,424	27,952
7	Palm Beach	319,819	26,655
8	Brevard	282,156	23,513
9	Lee	266,376	22,198
10	Volusia	208,836	17,403

Table 2. Top ten counties: non-resident saltwater fishing license sales, 1999-2000 fiscal year.

Rank	Florida Counties	Non-Resident Saltwater Fishing License Revenue (\$)	Units
1	Monroe	599,140	45,543
2	Lee	454,395	32,486
3	Collier	335,620	22,297
4	Bay	313,945	31,737
5	Charlotte	260,110	16,709
6	Sarasota	214,730	16,347
7	Pinellas	209,975	16,337
8	Okaloosa	176,820	18,980
9	Manatee	163,545	11,275
10	Franklin	154,525	16,559

Table 3. Top ten counties: resident freshwater fishing license sales, 1999-2000 fiscal year.

Rank	Florida Counties	Resident Freshwater Fishing License Revenue (\$)	Units
1	Polk	322,056	26,838
2	Broward	249,588	20,799
3	Hillsborough	237,504	19,792
4	Orange	218,244	18,187
5	Duval	210,240	17,520
6	Palm Beach	200,928	16,744
7	Marion	182,940	15,425
8	Volusia	140,604	11,717
9	Seminole	128,568	10,714
10	Lake	128,508	10,709

Table 4. Top ten counties: non-resident freshwater fishing license sales, 1999-2000 fiscal year.

Rank	Florida Counties	Non-Resident Freshwater Fishing License Revenue (\$)	Units
1	Okeechobee	319,470	14,724
2	Polk	208,200	9,979
3	Osceola	143,040	7,804
4	Lake	140,850	6,415
5	Putnam	124,755	6,287
6	Hendry	118,950	6,482
7	Volusia	115,730	6,017
8	Highlands	112,480	4,784
9	Glades	96,660	4,879
10	Marion	90,620	4,957