

Survey Background and Method

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation has been conducted since 1955 and is one of the oldest and most comprehensive continuing recreation surveys. The purpose of the Survey is to gather information on the number of anglers, hunters, and nonconsumptive participants in our country, as well as how often they participate and how much they spend on these activities.

The planning process for the 1991 Survey began in 1988 when the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) passed a resolution asking the Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct the eighth National Survey of wildlife-associated recreation. Funding for the Survey came from the administrative portion of the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Programs.

Consultations with State and Federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations such as the Wildlife Management Institute, Sport Fishing Institute, American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association, B.A.S.S., Inc., Wild Bird Feeding Institute, The Wildlife Society, National Wildlife Federation, and American Fisheries Society started in early 1989 to ascertain survey content. Other sportsmen's organizations and conservation groups, industry representatives, and researchers also provided valuable advice on questionnaire development, and data collection and reporting.

Four regional technical committees were set up under the auspices of the IAFWA to ensure that State fish and wildlife agencies had an opportunity to participate in all phases of survey planning and design. The committees

were made up of agency representatives.

The Survey was conducted in two phases by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the Fish and Wildlife Service. The first phase interviewed a sample of 129,500 households nationwide, primarily by telephone, to determine who in the household had fished, hunted, or engaged in a nonconsumptive wildlife-related activity in 1990, and who planned to engage in those activities in 1991. In most cases, one adult household member provided information for all household members.

The first phase was conducted in January and February 1991 and achieved a 95 percent response rate from those households that were eligible. It is important to note that the first phase covered 1990 activities while the next, more in-depth phase covered 1991 activities. For more detailed information on the 1990 data refer to appendix C.

The second phase of the Survey consisted of three detailed interviews conducted every 4 months from May 1991 to March 1992 with samples of likely anglers, hunters, and nonconsumptive participants who were identified in the initial screening phase. These interviews were conducted primarily by telephone, with in-person interviews for those respondents who could not be reached by telephone. Respondents in the second interviewing phase were limited to those at least 16 years old. Each respondent provided information pertaining only to his/her activities and expenditures. Sample sizes were designed to provide statistically reliable results at the State level for fishing, hunting, and nonconsumptive activities. Altogether, interviews were completed for 23,179 anglers and

hunters and 22,723 nonconsumptive participants. More detailed information on sampling procedures and response rates is found in appendix D.

Comparability With 1980 and 1985 Surveys

The 1991 Survey questionnaires were similar to those used in the 1980 and 1985 Surveys, and the sample sizes for the three Surveys were roughly the same. Ways in which the 1991 Survey differed from the 1980 and 1985 Surveys are:

- 1) The interviews were conducted primarily by telephone rather than by in-person interviews. The previous two Surveys required in-person interviews because data were collected for sub-state activity which required the use of visual aids.
- 2) The first phase interview was done at the beginning of the Survey year, rather than at

the end. This meant people had to be screened into the second phase based on anticipated activity, rather than past activity.

- 3) In 1985 the Bureau of the Census made a weighting adjustment to account for persons incorrectly screened out of the sample. It caused a positive bias in estimates of totals, but had little effect on summary estimates such as percentages and means. In 1991, this adjustment was not appropriate because of the change in the screening procedures. The Bureau of the Census did make an adjustment to account for persons who were screened out in 1991 but did participate in fishing or hunting that year. This adjustment was smaller than the 1985 and 1980 adjustments.
- 4) Three 4-month recall periods for each respondent were used rather than the one

12-month recall period used in previous Surveys. The recall period was changed as a result of research on recall bias, which found that the amount of activity and expenditures reported in 12-month recall surveys was over-estimated in comparison with that of shorter recall periods.

The 1991 Survey estimates are more accurate as a result of changes in methodologies. However, because of these changes, the 1991 estimates are not directly comparable with similar estimates of previous Surveys. The differences in data between the 1991 Survey and that of previous Surveys will be due at least in part to changes in the recall length and weighting adjustment and not due to actual declines in participation in those activities. The trends information in appendix B takes these differences into account in comparing past Survey results with 1991 Survey results.