

# OCEAN FACTS & FANCIES

## Fishermen Are Helping To Keep Oceans Healthy

(NAPSA)—Recreational fishermen are helping the government reel in information on the health of the ocean and its ecosystems. This role is likely to become even more important as efforts increase to restore and protect our oceans.

A new initiative, called the Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is improving the way the government estimates how many people are fishing, how often, and what's being caught.

"Catch and effort" figures, as these estimates are known, are based on information collected by anglers and voluntarily provided to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA. Getting this information as accurate as possible is essential, as they are the building blocks of ocean policy.

Anyone who has ever tried to estimate how many grains of sand make up a beach can appreciate the challenge. Actually, using a combination of math and statistical sampling, scientists have come up with a way to approach the problem.

Very similar techniques are used to answer an equally complex yet far more consequential question: How many fish are there in any given area of ocean? Fishermen are the key to finding the answer. They know better than anyone what they're catching and how frequently they're out on the water.

The question itself is so important because knowing to the best of our ability the size and health of fish stocks is the linch-



**Saltwater anglers are providing researchers with vital information on the health of the ocean and its ecosystems.**

pin in devising policies that safeguard our oceans' many bounties—food, livelihoods, recreation, environmental benefits—for future generations.

Plus, scientists tell us that the world's oceans are in trouble. Threats from pollution, climate change and, in some cases, overfishing are putting never-before-seen pressure on fisheries.

An accurate picture is also important because sportfishing is important to so many Americans. More Americans fish in saltwater (15 million) than play tennis (10 million). And the \$30 billion generated by saltwater angling supports more than a quarter million jobs and is the economic lifeblood of many coastal communities.

For more about how fishermen are helping to protect our oceans, visit [www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov).