

## Florida: The Fishing Capital of the World

With more than 2,270 miles of tidal shoreline, more than 11,000 miles of waterways, and year-round weather ideal for outdoor activities, Florida is world-renowned for its recreational fishing. What is less known is the economic impact of all the differing types of fishing activity in our state. Last year, Florida led the nation in total angler expenditures, with almost \$5 billion dollars spent, supporting more than 80,200 jobs.<sup>1</sup> Of these jobs, more than 14,000 are attributed to freshwater fishing.

Fishing supports jobs in several industries, including retail, boat manufacturing and repair, research, and tourism. In fact, the largest share of fishing expenditures goes to trip-related expenses, including food, lodging, and transportation, which together totaled \$2.8 billion dollars in 2011, or 61 percent of all fishing expenditures.<sup>2</sup>

The fishing industry continues to grow in Florida. According to a 2013 Census Bureau report, fishing days increased by 24 percent in the state of Florida from 2006 to 2011.

Nationwide, fishing tackle sales have grown more than 16 percent during the past 5 years. That growth is reflected in Florida by the increase in fishing-related retail activity, most notably with the opening of 6 new Bass Pro Shops in the state, adding to Florida's 6 current stores.

### Sportfishing Attracts Tourists

According to the 2013 Census Bureau report and the American Sportfishing Association report, nearly 1.2 million non-residents fished in Florida during the past year.

#### FLORIDA FISHING AT A GLANCE

7,700 LAKES  
 10,550 MILES OF RIVERS  
 2,276 MILES OF TIDAL SHORELINES  
 NO. OF ANGLERS: 3.1 MILLION  
 NON-RESIDENT ANGLERS: 1.2 MILLION  
 TOTAL ANGLER EXPENDITURES: \$4.95 BILLION  
 NON-RESIDENT ANGLER EXPENDITURES: \$898 MILLION  
 TOTAL FISHING DAYS: 57,593,836  
 TOTAL NON-RESIDENT FISHING DAYS: 9,543,924  
 JOBS IN FISHING INDUSTRY: 80,211  
 STATE AND LOCAL REVENUES: \$516 MILLION  
 RETAIL SALES: \$977 MILLION (FRESHWATER) + \$3.9 BILLION (SALTWATER)

Sources: Visit Florida & American Sportfishing Association

PHOTO: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

<sup>1</sup> "Sportfishing in America". American Sportfishing Association. January 2013

<sup>2</sup> "2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation". U.S. Census Bureau. March 2013.

While some of these visitors came to Florida primarily for sportfishing, others find a way to work fishing activities into business trips or family vacations.

Florida's expansive coastal environment is home to a wide variety of licensed charter fishing boat options, which are available for individuals or groups to rent all around the state, and Florida annually hosts hundreds of fishing tournaments for locally and internationally competitive anglers.

Additionally, several boating and fishing expos are held in Florida throughout the year. Some of these include the Palm Beach International Boat Show, Miami International Boat Show, The Florida Sportsman Expo, Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, and the Southeast US Boat Show, which attract boaters and anglers from Florida, the U.S., and across the world.

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**fishingcapital.com includes several articles and recommendations on popular fishing sites, tours, and deals.**

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An FWCC fishing clinic on the Naples Pier. Photo: Naples News

## Sportsmen Pay for Conservation

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC), Florida generated \$9.4 million dollars in freshwater licenses, and \$26.8 million dollars in saltwater licenses in FY2011-12.<sup>3</sup> About 30 percent of the freshwater license revenues and about 46 percent saltwater license revenues were collected from non-residents. The revenue generated from these licenses is vital for the conservation of Florida fisheries, as it ensures continued success of this industry in our state by keeping fish populations at sustainable levels.

Nationally, there is a federal excise tax on fishing gear, boats and boat fuel that contributes \$390 million annually to the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund for conservation efforts around the U.S. Anglers also donate more than \$400 million each year to conservation and fishing organizations that protect and develop quality habitat to ensure quality fishing opportunities.

## Getting more people "hooked" on fishing

In an effort to introduce more people to fishing, The FWCC allowed for two license-free saltwater fishing dates in 2013. The first was held on June 1, and another will take place on Saturday, September 1. A license-free freshwater day was also allowed on June 8. In addition, the FWCC organized several activities across the state in June, Visit Florida's *Fishing Month*. Some of these activities included dockside outreach, where staff talked to the public at several boat ramps and docks about saltwater fishing. The staff also welcomed tourists at the welcome centers on major Florida interstates, and offered a women's fishing clinic. Season and size restrictions are still enforced during the license-free days.

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<sup>3</sup> The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. <http://my.fwc.com/media/2258540/SalesComparisonTable11-12.pdf>





The FWCC also offers saltwater fishing clinics for children ages 5-15 and their parents. With the goal of creating “responsible marine resource stewards,” the clinics teach children how to cast, tie knots, tackle fish, and the importance of becoming an ethical angler. The clinics also include a “touch tank” session for children to learn about marine animals and how they interact in their habitats. These clinics are funded by the Sport Fish Restoration Program, a national program managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which uses revenue generated by the federal excise taxes to purchase fishing items.<sup>4</sup>

### The International Game & Fish Association Museum

Florida is so important to the sportfishing industry that the International Game and Fish Association (IGFA) headquarters has been located in Florida since the 1950s. It has resided in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Pompano Beach, and moved in 1999 to Dania Beach.

The IGFA museum in Dania Beach houses the headquarters as well as the Hall of Fame and a 60,000 square foot Museum. Founded in 1939, the IGFA supports scientific research into fisheries, is a proponent of aquatic habitat conservation, and has been the official keeper of saltwater world records since its founding. IGFA took over the freshwater record registry when Field & Stream handed over its 68 years of records in 1978.

### Conclusion

Although it is often overlooked as a generator of tourists and jobs, fishing is responsible for a significant share of tourism, state and local revenues, and jobs in our state. Approximately 46 million Americans fish, more than play golf (21 million) and tennis (13 million) combined. Fishing provides a positive economic impact on Florida tourism as well as local businesses.

<sup>4</sup> “Sport Fishing Restoration”. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. <http://myfwc.com/fishing/sfr/>

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