

Licensing Compliance among Late-winter Nonresident Freshwater Fishermen in Florida

James D. McElveen, *Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 620 South Meridian Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600*

Abstract: Nonresident fishing license sales are a significant proportion of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission's annual revenues. This study sought to estimate annual revenue loss due to improper licensing of late-winter nonresident freshwater fishermen. Only 7% were improperly licensed, representing \$172,000 in lost revenue.

Proc. Annu. Conf. Southeast. Assoc. Fish and Wildl. Agencies 44:418-422

Approximately 40% of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) revenue is derived from the sale of fishing licenses. Due to the magnitude of revenue these licenses generate, it is in the GFC's best interest to maximize fishing license sales. Different sources estimate widely varying degrees of improper licensing among Florida freshwater fishermen. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 1980 survey estimated that 35% of Florida's freshwater anglers fished without proper licenses. GFC Division of Law Enforcement data (1989) indicates closer to 5%. GFC Division of Fisheries data (1988) indicated that at least 10% of resident license buyers were not residents.

This study sought to more accurately estimate the percent (and therefore the number) of late-winter freshwater fishermen that are improperly licensed. This data will be used to estimate annual revenue loss as a result of improper licensing. For the purposes of this study, improper licensing consists of (1) Nonresidents who fish without a license, and (2) Nonresidents who fish with a resident license.

The assistance of Scott Hardin and Major Kyle Hill of the GFC is gratefully acknowledged in the sample and survey design. The author also thanks the 16 GFC wildlife officers and their supervisors for conducting the survey.

Methods

Five-hundred-fifty-eight nonresident fishermen were sampled during 11-20 March 1989. The state was partitioned into 3 zones with sample sizes allocated to each based on percent of nonresident fishing licenses sold in each region (Fig. 1).

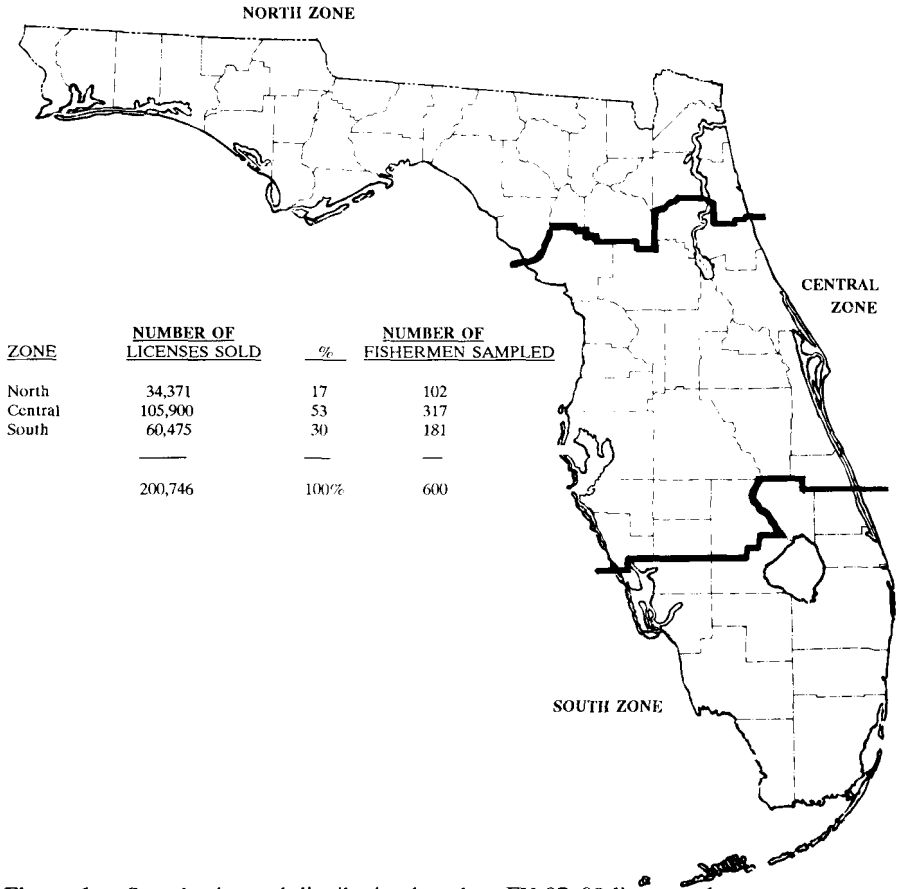


Figure 1. Sample size and distribution based on FY 87-88 license sales.

Sampling was conducted on major water bodies in each region with the within-region-sample partitioned among these water bodies (Table 1). A trial run of the sampling procedures was conducted 4 March 1989 on Lake Talquin.

Surveys were conducted on selected bodies of water (Table 1) by wildlife officers. Fishermen were sampled on the water by wildlife officers. Officers continued sampling until the sample size for nonresident fishermen for that water body was reached.

Procedures

Officers approached fishermen by boat, informed them that they were conducting a survey, and asked for their cooperation in answering a few questions. If a fisherman refused to cooperate the officer did not insist.

Officers began the survey of each fisherman by orally obtaining data about the

Table 1. Water body, number of nonresident fishermen surveyed, and number of improperly licensed nonresident fishermen in Florida, March 1989.

Water body and ramp	Non-resident fishermen surveyed	Non-resident fishermen improperly licensed
South Zone		
Lake Okeechobee (Clewiston)	45	0
Belle Glade (city ramp)	38	2
Belle Glade (Okeetance)	40	5
Lake Trafford (SR 850) and Caloosa River	23	3
Conservation areas:		
2A (Sawgrass ramp)	15	1
3 (Holiday Park ramp)	14	2
Total, South Zone	175	13
Central Zone		
Lake Griffin (Hurlong Park)	67	5
Lake Toho (Southport)	53	2
Lake Harris (Singletary Park)	62	3
St. Johns River (Astor)	60	1
Polk County Lake	43	11
Total, Central Zone	285	22
North Zone		
Lake Jackson (Red & Sam)	25	0
Apalachicola River (just below Woodruff Dam)	23	2
Orange Lake (Rawlings Ramp)	25	1
Lake Lochloosa (Off 301)	25	1
Total, North Zone	98	4
Grand totals	558	39

fisherman's domicile and boating equipment. The purpose of this information was to give the officer an opportunity to observe the fisherman and make a judgement as to whether or not the fisherman is being truthful about his legal state of residency.

Officers then asked for the fisherman's license and compared data on the license with data fisherman gave orally. Based on this comparison and on the fisherman's manner in answering questions, the officer then checked the appropriate spaces on the reverse side of each survey form to indicate what the officer believed was the fisherman's residency status and license status. Officers checked what they believed to be true, even though they could not prove it in court. If the evidence was such that they could make a case, they did so. Administration of the survey took 4 to 6 minutes per fisherman.

Results and Discussion

Level of Compliance

Thirty-nine of 558 nonresident fishermen (7%) were improperly licensed (Table 1). At the 95% confidence level, the actual percent of improperly licensed nonresi-