

# Despite Economy, Fishing License Sales Are Up

*Sales increase mirrors recreational fishing's heyday in the 1960s and 1970s*

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) and the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) will publish a quarterly fishing license sales index to track trends that impact the industry and recreational fishing community.

“Not since the 1970s have we seen a single-year increase in fishing license sales like we’ve seen so far in 2009,” said ASA President and CEO Mike Nussman. “Understanding how the needle moves in terms of sportfishing participation is important not just for the

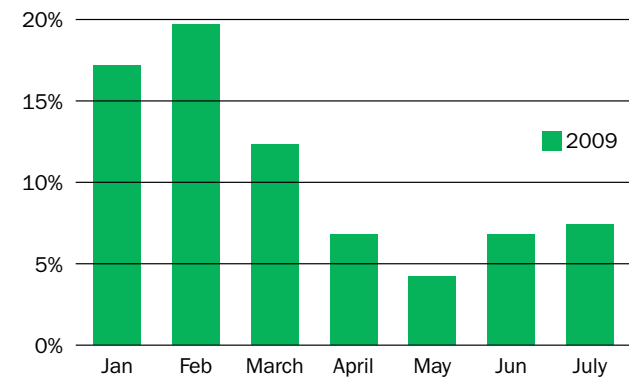
sportfishing industry, but also for the entire outdoor recreation community. This new license metric will provide everyone with important sales and participation information.”

“Our recent [research](#) shows that fishing is the number one gateway activity for introducing children and their families to the outdoors,” said RBFF President and CEO Frank Peterson. “We believe that national campaigns, such as Take Me Fishing™, and state-based sportfishing marketing and direct mail also are having a positive effect.”

As of Sept. 1, 2009, state fish and wildlife agencies reported a 7.7 percent increase in the number of licenses sold year-to-date compared to the same months last year (January through July). The same states also saw a 7 percent increase in the number of licenses sold in July 2009 compared with July 2008.

According to Southwick Associates, the firm analyzing the data, fishing license sales increased at a faster rate in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the second quarter. Increases of 20 percent or more were common in the first quarter. A larger volume of sales, however, occurred in the second quarter—the peak period for license sales nationally—and had a greater effect on the year-to-date sales trend than first quarter license sales. After standardizing the July index to contain the same states as previous months, license sales increased nearly a full percentage point over May and June sales. In general, more fishing licenses are sold during the second

## Percentage Change in the Number of Licenses Sold Year-to-Date in 2009 Compared to the Same Months in the Previous Year



quarter (April, May and June) than any other time of the year.

“Reasons for the 2009 license sales increases range from a slow economy, which may allow people more time to engage in outdoor activities, to recreational fishing being a lower-cost alternative to other forms of recreation,” said Peterson.

“When the index moves by just a tenth of a point, 40,000 anglers have entered or quit sportfishing. Considering the typical angler spends \$176 a year on fishing tackle alone and contributes more than \$40 annually to conservation via license dollars and

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### The License Sales Index

- The license sales index is a timely metric of fishing license sales. It is not an exact measure of all fishing license sales nationally.
- Results are based on a weighted average of trends among participating states. States with larger angler populations have a greater impact on the results than smaller states.
- Because of confidentiality considerations extended to participating states, license sales trends are not available on a per-state basis.
- This report is the first in a series of planned fishing license sales indices. Future indices will be released quarterly.

excise taxes, a small change in the index represents big changes on the ground,” said Nussman.

Ultimately, anglers and other sportsmen and women, are the most significant funding source for conservation and recreation in the United States. Through the purchase of fishing licenses and special excise taxes on gear and motorboat fuel, hundreds of millions of anglers’ dollars each year are collected or funneled to states for conservation and recreation. In 2008, \$720 million of

these excise taxes were distributed for fisheries management and recreational boating enhancement. In addition, fishing license sales generated \$600 million in revenue for state fish and wildlife agencies.

State fish and wildlife agencies reporting license sales numbers include Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas and Utah. They were selected for their ability to provide consistent license sales data to

illustrate both a national and regional perspective. As more states expand their data-reporting capacities, the number of reporting states will increase.

For more information about the sportfishing industry contact ASA at 703-519-9691. For more information about angling and boating participation, contact RBFF at 703-519-0013. For more information about recreational fishing data and statistics, contact Southwick Associates at 904-277-9765. ■