Recreational Technical Committee

Recommendation supported by the Operations and Advisory Committees on updates to MRIP APAIS questions for 2027

October 30, 2026

The ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee (RTC) discussed and considered two topics for additional questions to be modified in the tablet-based APAIS Dockside Intercept Application (DIA). Responses to both recommendations would be available in the downloadable MRIP micro-data, and do not impact standard MRIP catch estimation calculations.

1) Depredation:
   The RTC recommends adding a software-based item in 2027 to present depredator categories using this list below:
   • Sharks
   • Bony Fish
   • Dolphins/porpoises
   • Seals/sea lions
   • Birds
   • Other/unknown

2) Area Fished 10-minute grid chart:
   The RTC recommends a comparative sub-sample approach on all APAIS boat (private and For-Hire) assignments to ask the area fished question to every 3rd boat party, beginning in Wave 2 2027.

   This option provides the opportunity to collect greater spatial resolution on area fished to support stock assessment splits (e.g., cod stock areas, activity N/S of Cape Hatteras, etc.) while simultaneously allowing broader testing before full implementation. The feasibility testing was considered insufficient to fully evaluate potential impacts of adding this question. Broader testing across all states will provide more evidence to evaluate if this change will introduce bias, negatively impact angler participation or cause systematic differences in area fished that would directly impact estimates.

Background information:

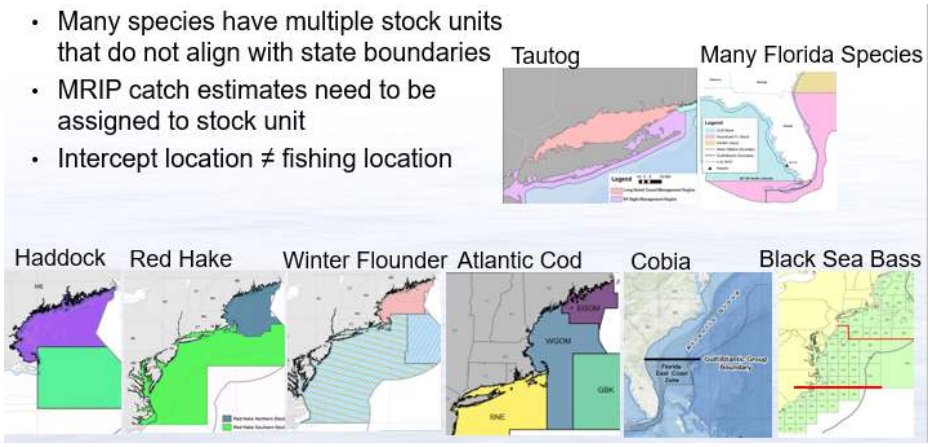
Depredation

- Throughout 2026, additional disposition codes were added to the existing question on unavailable catch and available catch to describe depredation damage to fish caught with the depredator included as a comment.
    - During Waves 1-4 2026, 111 APAIS intercepts (out of 47,093 ME-GA) indicated depredation events
    - Frequent predators: Birds (50%), sharks (27%), bony fish (10%), unknown (10%)
    - Common fish species preyed upon (Acadian Redfish (45%), black sea bass (7%) Striped bass (5%)
    - The new question as a select list of predators is expected to improve clarity on responses.
    - Data will be available in the downloadable MRIP micro-data for evaluation by stock assessments and does not impact standard MRIP catch estimation calculations.

Area Fished

From May to October 2026, five states performed feasibility testing of adding a modified area fished question that would collect more detailed spatial information than the standard current APAIS identifier of inland, inshore/state waters (0-3 miles) and offshore (3-200 miles).

- Rationale: Assigning catch to stock units:



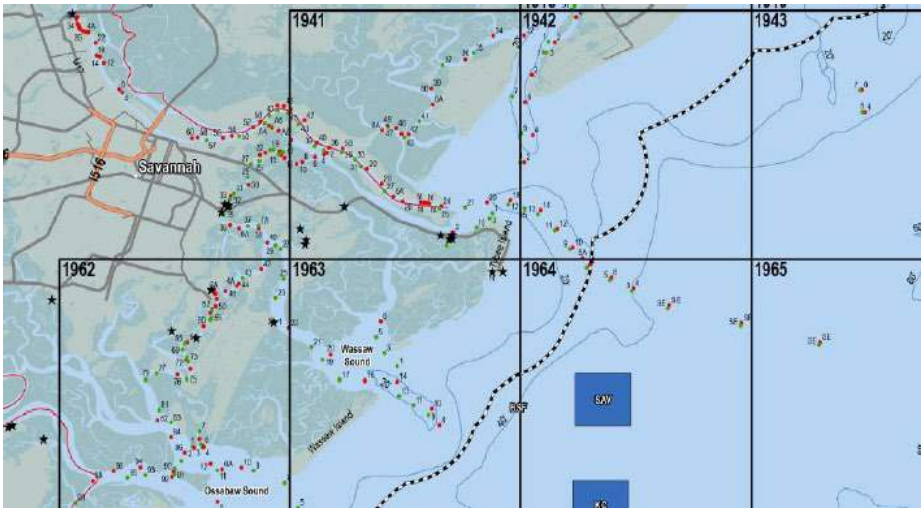
Around 400 intercepts were collected across the five states (MA, CT, MD, NC, and GA). Two methods were tested by handing the angler a paper map asking them to either:

A. Identify a ten-minute grid square in response to the question “In which box was most of your fishing effort today?” For the grid, angler responses were coded into the DIA as a 4-digit number with codes for ‘declined to respond’ or ‘don’t know’.
B. Select a point on the map in response to the question “Please point to a location/general area on the chart where you spent most of your fishing effort today”. The latitude/longitude coordinates were recorded with option for ‘declined to respond’.

Example of image of tablet map with 10-minute grid cells for Massachusetts.



Example of paper map with 10-minute grid for Georgia.



- Testing Summary
  - Testing conducted from May-Oct
  - 73% pick a point method, 27% pick a grid
  - 90% full interviews, 10% partial
  - < 1% overall refusal rate to modified area fished question

State	Testing Days	# of Sites	Total Int.	CH	PR	SH	Full Int.	Partial Int.	Point	Grid	Refusals to Area Fished
MA	14	14	107	20	87	0	107	0	107	0	0
CT	10	5	102	4	93	5	60	42	67	35	1
MD	2	2	30	0	30	0	30	0	30	0	0
NC	7	8	21	0	21	0	21	0	20	1	0
GA	22	14	159	0	159	0	159	0	82	77	0
Total	55	43	419	24	390	5	377	42	306	113	1

- Qualitative Feedback – Field Staff Feedback combined results for pick a grid or pick a point methods
  - 66 forms submitted, experience strongly positive or no effect
  - Minimal effect on personal safety and equipment
  - Anglers were comfortable responding

After discussing the results from these two methods, the RTC recommends using the 10-minute grid square as the preferred methodology over selecting a point location at this time. There may be opportunities in future years to move to point selection as tablet technology advances. The modified additional question remains an optional response and does not end the survey if the angler refuses; instead, the survey continues using the currently collected area fished information. Data will be available in the downloadable MRIP micro-data for evaluation by stock assessments and does not impact standard MRIP catch estimation calculations.

Once the grid was selected as the preferred method, the RTC considered the following four options for implementation in 2027:

A) Status quo do not add the modified area-fished question.
B) Full implementation of modified area fished for all APAIS interviews in all states.
C) Develop a pilot project of separate assignments to test the modified area fished question and responses in several states. This approach would require additional funding and may impact RAPID sampling allocations.
D) Use a comparative sub-sample approach on all APAIS boat (private and For-Hire) assignments to ask the area fished question to every 3rd boat party. For 2027 sampling, this creates

potential for 1/3 of 80,000 intercepts on 15,000 assignments coastwide. Option D allows comparison of angler responses in 2027 through domain analysis comparison between sub-sample and standard intercepts. It also addresses concerns with full implementation in 2027. The systematic sampling approach (every ⅓ boat party) can be adjusted up or down throughout the year as needed after periodic data analysis. The RTC and staff note this approach can be programmed into the tablet and implemented with existing assignment design and funding.

The RTC recommends option D, the comparative sub-sample approach on all APAIS boat (private and For-Hire) assignments to ask the area fished question to every 3rd boat party, beginning in Wave 2 2027.