

Florida attracts anglers like chum attracts fish

Florida Fish Busters'

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Florida is the "Fishing Capital of the World" in part because it is the destination of choice for anglers from throughout the United States and numerous countries around the world.

With great natural resources and the efforts of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and responsible anglers, Florida is home to some of the highest quality, most diverse fishing in the world. The results are like a well-chummed fishing hole, attracting anglers

who vote for their favorite fisheries with their best cast and hard-earned cash.

The latest national statistics showed Florida has 2.8 million resident anglers (versus Texas at No. 2, with 2.5 million) and Florida annually attracts 885,000 tourists who fish here (versus 395,000 who visit No. 2 North Carolina). As a result, Florida's economy benefits by a whopping billion dollars in direct sales (No. 2 Wisconsin receives only \$0.6 billion from nonresidents). And even though Texas has



— they are the yellowhammer state). New residents and snowbirds, who have lived in Florida for less than six months or don't claim Florida as their permanent residence, make up 7.7 percent. After that the numbers drop but can be seen to follow the I-95, I-75 and I-10 corridors.

Florida earned the title “Fishing Capital of the World” by coupling its great resources with responsible management of those resources by the FWC. Anglers will be coming in abundance to test their skills, and we hope to get them to try out some new fishing opportunities. By targeting a wide variety of species and spreading out across the state rather than over fishing historically publicized locations, we can lessen the strain on any specific fishery and help promote sustainable use.

You can help keep Florida the Fishing Capital by following sound conservation practices and encouraging others to do as well. It takes only a small effort to make a big difference by following a few key standards:

- Promote, through personal example, ethical behavior in use of aquatic resources.
- Value and respect the aquatic environment and all living things.
- Avoid spilling and never dump pollutants, such as gas or oil.
- Keep fishing sites litter-free. Dispose of trash, including worn lines, leaders and hooks, in appropriate containers, and recycle when possible.
- Purchase and keep current your fishing license. If you are exempt, you may still purchase a license as an easy way to contribute directly to conservation.
- Take precautionary measures to prevent spread of exotic plants and animals.

- Learn and obey angling and boating regulations.
- Treat other anglers, boaters and property owners with courtesy and respect, and never trespass on private lands or waters.
- Keep no more fish than needed for consumption, and never wastefully discard fish.
- Carefully handle and release alive all fish that are unwanted or prohibited by regulation. Use tackle and techniques that minimize harm to fish when “catch and release” angling.

Our Web site (MyFWC.com) and publications, along with work we do with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (TakeMeFishing.org) and VISIT FLORIDA (VisitFlorida.com), provide additional information to assist anglers to locate new areas and to learn to fish ethically for a variety of species.

*Instant licenses are available at MyFWC.com/License or by calling 1-888-FISH-FLORIDA (347-4356). Report violators by calling *FWC or #FWC on your cell, or 1-888-404-3922. Visit MyFWC.com/Fishing/Updates for more Fish Busters' columns.*