BIL-Funded Project Will Help Break Down Language Barriers in Annual Angler Survey

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An angler fishing on North Cove in Old Saybrook, CT. Turn to page 2 to learn how BIL funds will be used to reach out to non-English speakers for the state's annual angler survey.

What is BIL?

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (or BIL) was passed by Congress in 2021 to improve infrastructure and climate resiliency in an equitable manner throughout the United States.

Under the legislation, the Long Island Sound Study will receive $21.2 million per year to fund local projects over the next five years (2022 – 2026). Several projects will support the Justice40 Initiative to provide funding assistance to underserved and overburdened communities.

Why Address Language Barriers?

An annual angler survey is a key data collection practice for understanding angler and fisheries management needs in the Sound. Connecticut intends to encourage equitable participation through hiring translators to support the survey to non-English speakers.

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) brings agencies, commissions, universities, citizens, and environmental, industry, and user groups together to improve the health of Long Island Sound.
To learn more about the BIL projects, visit the fact sheet series at: *LISStudy.net/BIL*

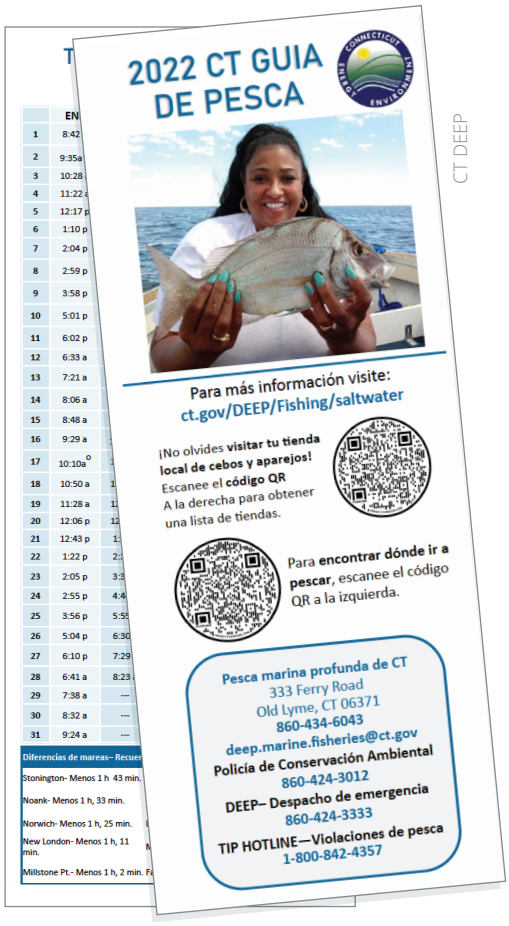
CT DEEP Will Add Bilingual Staff to Help Administer Angler Survey

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) is taking steps to eliminate language barriers to improve the accuracy of the data collected from annual recreational fishing surveys. To help do this, the Long Island Sound Study is providing $62,632 to hire two seasonal staff members who will be able to communicate with non-English speaking community members. The project is being funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

Since 1988, CT DEEP has been conducting in-person interviews with Connecticut anglers fishing off the shores of Long Island Sound. These interviews, which take place as part of a multi-agency partnership called the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), provide important data about angler needs and fishery management. Results from the survey can influence annual catch limits and approximate current fish stocks. While the information has been useful, critical data gaps have persisted due to language barriers between the surveyors and the many non-English speaking anglers who are unable to take part in the survey and contribute additional data to the survey.

CT DEEP facilitates the annual angler survey in Connecticut with local staff as part of a nationwide survey conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Program. It is conducted at a carefully selected subset of the 213 public fishing access sites in Connecticut. Site visits are arranged throughout the season on various days of the week, hours, and geographic locations to diversify the types of anglers interviewed for the survey. Anglers are asked a number of questions to help track and evaluate user trends regarding saltwater recreational fishing, including the types of fish they caught and whether each fish was harvested or released.

Language barriers have been noted as one of the most common reasons for an interview not to be conducted. In 2021, for example, there were over 120 missed opportunities for the survey to be conducted due to language barriers. Many of the missed opportunities occurred among anglers who spoke dialects of Spanish as well as many other languages. The seasonal staff members will be hired from the local communities and will be able to communicate in some of the frequently spoken non-English languages of the area.



CT DEEP distributes a saltwater fishing guide in Spanish. Materials for the BIL project also will be printed in different languages.

The data that is collected through these surveys goes on to support fisheries science and management. Records of how many individuals of a particular species are collected at different geographic locations can help influence future sustainable fishing practices. Having the ability to interview all willing anglers at the site, regardless of the languages they speak, will allow for a more extensive and accurate data set.