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Further reading:

Hynes, S., Gaeven, R. and O'Reilly, P. (2017). Estimating a Total Demand Function for Sea Angling Pursuits. Ecological Economics, 134, 73–81.

Inland Fisheries Ireland, 2015. The Economic Contribution of Bass and Sea Angling in Ireland, IFI publication, Dublin.

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Read More About: The Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit (SEMRU) within the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change.

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Irish marine environment shown to have high value as a recreational angling resource

Sea anglers are one of the main marine recreation user groups in Ireland. Within Ireland, an estimated 127,000 people go sea angling every year along Ireland's 5,600 kilometres of coastline (Inland Fisheries Ireland, 2015). However, as an activity, sea angling is often over-looked in debates related to the sustainability of commercial fisheries, tourism and impacts on marine ecosystem service provision from coastal developments. With this in mind this research focused on the use value associated with sea angling in Irish marine waters. In particular it estimates the first total demand model for sea angling recreational pursuits where the total number of trips taken by anglers in the season to any location along the Irish coast, is modelled. The analysis is timely given the current debates around how best to manage the heavily depleted stocks of sea bass in EU waters.

Research Findings

In order to obtain information relating to the demand for sea angling in Ireland, an on-site survey of sea anglers was conducted on behalf of Inland Fisheries Ireland. The on-site survey was carried out over a 9 month timeframe across 16 sea angling sampling locations in the Republic of Ireland. Using this data, a travel cost modelling approach was employed to estimate the sea angling use value of the marine resource around Ireland in terms of anglers' consumer surplus (CS) and willingness to pay (WTP). The results indicate that sea anglers in Ireland derive considerable utility from this recreational activity. The difference between what a trip actually costs and what the anglers would have been willing to pay for it represents the true net economic value (the CS) to those sea anglers. Using the results of the travel cost model (a generalized negative binomial model) the average CS per person per trip was calculated at €242 while the average travel cost per trip observed was €159. This suggests that sea anglers in Ireland receive benefit from angling well in excess of their angling costs. The model results also indicated that the demand pattern of sea bass anglers specifically was not significantly different from sea angler' targeting other fish species. Using the GNB model the total use value of the sea angling experience to the sea bass anglers in Ireland annually was estimated to be €81 million, €65 million of this being the CS.

Policy Implications

There is continuous debate around whether it makes economic sense for a species such as sea bass to be managed exclusively as an anglers' rather than a commercial species. Indeed, sea angling in general is a highly demanded marine recreation experience and it is therefore important for fisheries managers and policy makers to understand the value of such activity in order to generate management plans that provide the greatest welfare benefits to society. While the value of commercial landings in Irish waters is assessed on an annual basis at both the national and EU level, much less emphasis is given to the value of marine fish stocks from a recreational use perspective. Future fisheries management plans aimed at generating greater overall value to society requires that the benefits of recreational anglers also be quantified.