

Marine recreational fisheries advisory report for Catalonia (N GSA 6) 2026



This report conveys ICATMAR's consideration on marine recreational fisheries management actions supported by its monitoring program.

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Introduction

Marine recreational fisheries (MRF) are a widespread and diverse component of coastal fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea, involving a wide range of fishing techniques, gears, target species and fisher profiles. Their management is embedded within a multi-level regulatory framework very limited in management enforcement measures that combines European, national and regional regulations addressing different aspects of the activity, including fishing effort, gear characteristics, catch limits, minimum conservation reference sizes and a few temporal closures. The diversity and flexibility of the activity, together with its increasing socioeconomic relevance, make the development of effective and adaptive management measures particularly challenging.

In the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea (Catalan coast), the six-year transition period from the pilot MRF ICATMAR monitoring study to a robust and continuous program has been essential to improve knowledge of the activity, assess its interactions with marine resources and support evidence-based management. In Catalonia, ICATMAR has implemented a comprehensive fishery monitoring program combining online and onsite surveys, that together with data on official MRF license, provides information on recreational fishers social profile, fishing activity, effort and catches along the Catalan coast (north of the GSA 6; Figure 1). Here, we briefly introduce the current monitoring framework and the management measures developed to date, and provide considerations for the future update of the regulatory framework for marine recreational fisheries in Catalonia.

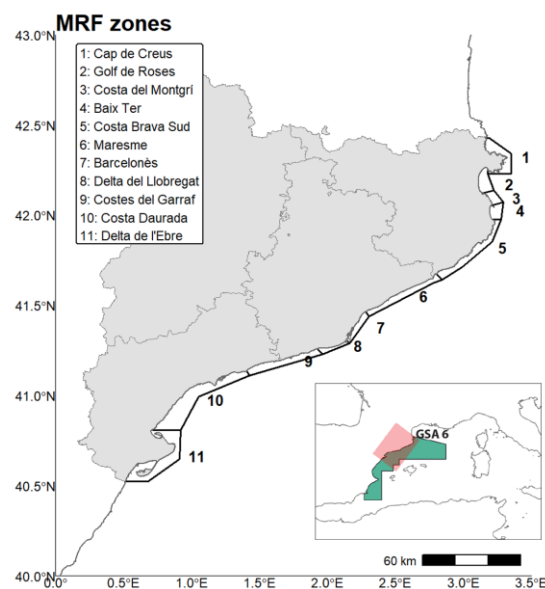


Figure 1. Study area and zone divisions of ICATMAR marine recreational fisheries monitoring program.

1. MRF monitoring program



ICATMAR has implemented a continuous monitoring program covering marine recreational fisheries along the Catalan coast, combining a complementary onsite and online survey data collection. The continuous monitoring integrates the different stages of data collection and processing, since administrative licensing frame to both sampling frames, data validation and integration into a common database (Figure 2). This structure provides robust data that allows information to extrapolation and for the assessment of fishing activity and its temporal dynamics.

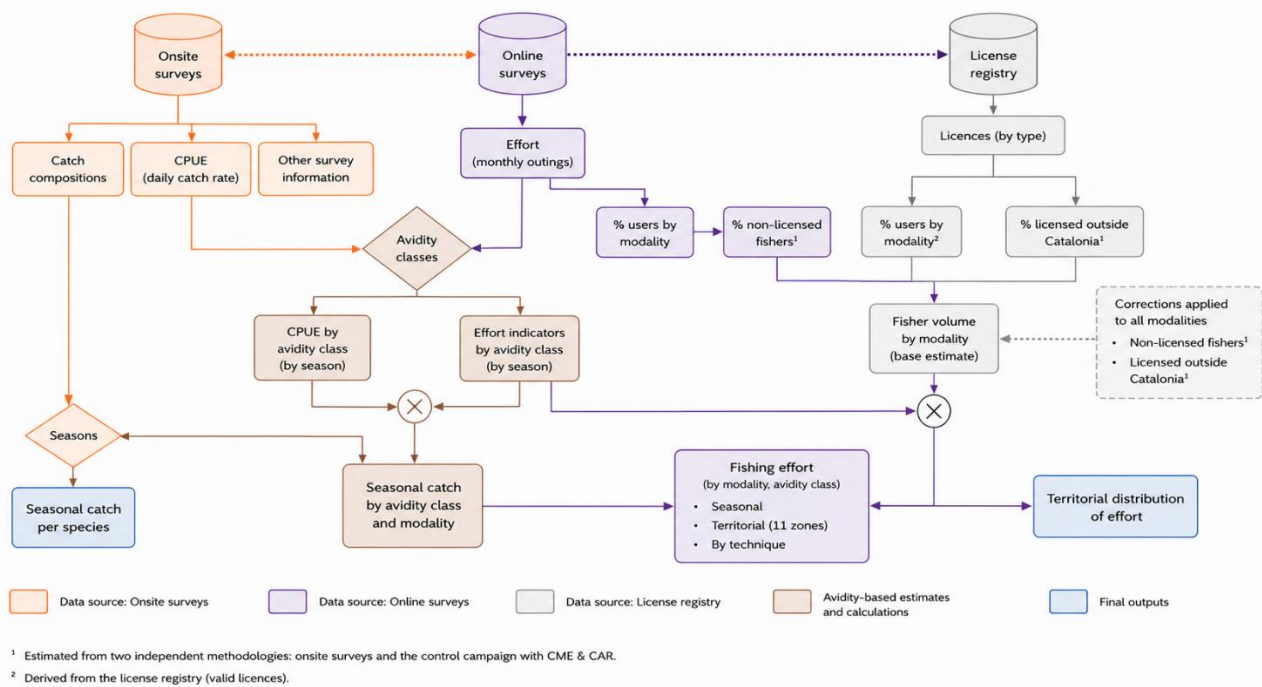


Figure 2. Joint methodology overview for analyzed marine recreational fishing data. Data sources and analysis products for onsite methodology (orange), online methodology (purple), license register system (grey), and avidity-based calculations (brown). Blue boxes refer to the final outputs.

The onsite surveys have been conducted across a stratified network of fishing zones and survey locations (port and roving surveys by boat and on foot), covering shore and boat angling, and spearfishing activities. Between 2020 and 2025, this component has provided extensive direct observations of recreational fishery activity, including (MRF), fishing yield, and catch composition (Figure 3). In parallel, an online survey has been conducted monthly since august 2020, using a random sample of recreational fishing license holders to collect information on fishing activity, fishing effort and social aspects, such as expenditures. Over the 2020–2025 period, the program has generated over 44 000 valid questionnaires, providing broad temporal coverage of recreational fishing activity and complementing the information obtained through the online survey across Catalonia coast (Figure 4).

2020 - 2025

Total responses to on-site surveys

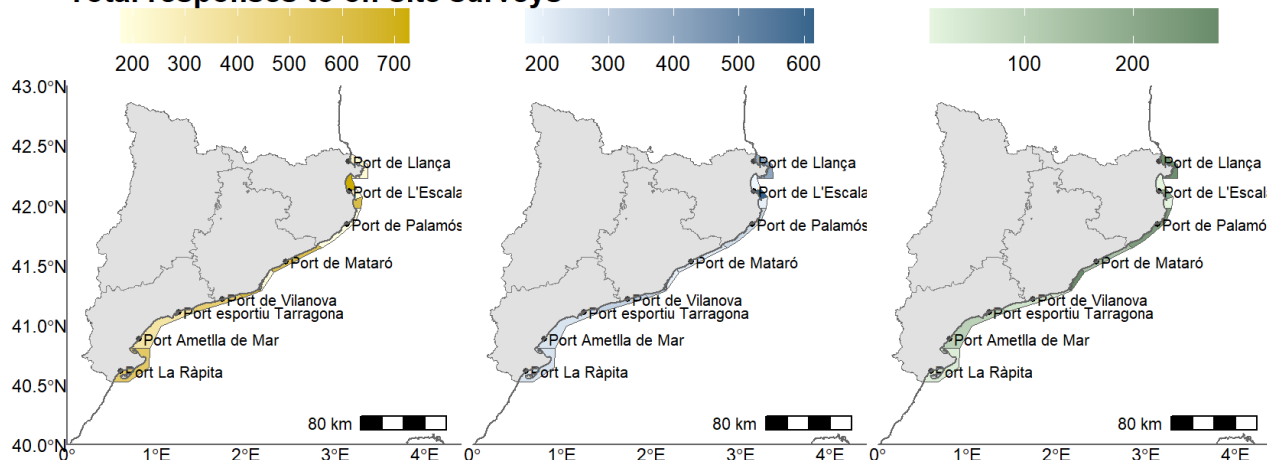


Figure 3. Number of responses for each fishing modality in the onsite surveys conducted in each of the 11 zones during the period 2020-2025.

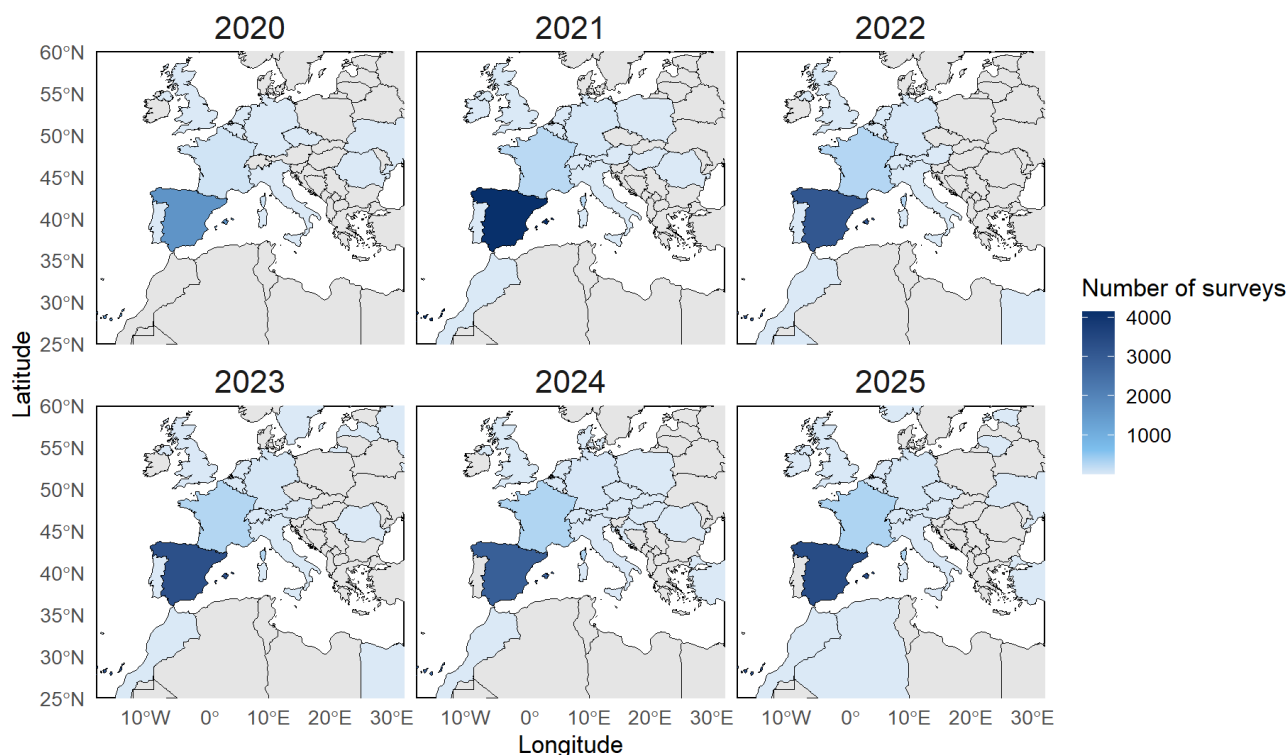


Figure 4. Spatial distribution of user's devices used to respond MRF online surveys between 2020 and 2025.

2. Current management framework and progress to data



In 2019, the MRF Working Group was established to define guidelines and objectives for monitoring the entire Catalan coast in a way that could effectively respond to administrative needs. Since then, ICATMAR has developed a scientific data collection program to support knowledge transfer to both public administrations (Catalan and Spanish) and the scientific community and sector (MR fishers). Subsequently, the MRF Co-management Table has been created, progressively working towards shared management objectives and building consensus around specific measures, and update the actually law (DECRET 109/1995). This process has included the achievement of small and intermediate milestones, such as identifying common objectives between marine recreational and small-scale fisheries and developing shared approaches to biological closures for selected species. The information generated through the annual monitoring of marine recreational fisheries provided an important evidence base for this process and supported the development of subsequent technical assessments (ICATMAR, 23-04; ICATMAR, 24-04; ICATMAR, 25-08). Building on this progressive process, the first technical assessment (ICATMAR, 23-11) established biological indicators for the northern Catalan coast zone and provided proposals for three complementary management measures: minimum catch sizes, based primarily on size at first maturity; species-specific daily bag limits; and biological closed seasons, based on reproductive periods. The ICATMAR assessment considered 46 species in total, selected according to their relevance in term of abundances and biomass on the onsite monitoring program, also biological or management criteria were taking into account for the final assessment. These recommendations provided the first scientific basis for the subsequent development of management measures through the co-management process. In parallel, an inspection campaign was carried out in collaboration with the rural police and the Mossos d'Esquadra, in order to calculate the percentage of unlicensed anglers as accurately as possible.

This process resulted in the adoption of Resolution ARP/3253/2024 for the inland waters of the Girona coast, establishing minimum catch sizes, daily catch limits and biological closures for selected species (see Annex the tryptic that was distribution to simplify all the information in the resolution). The approach was subsequently extended to the central and southern Catalan coast through the ICATMAR, 25-03 assessment, which applied the same biological criteria and management principles while maintaining consistency with the measures established for the northern coast (Resolutions ARP/3310/2025 and ARP/3311/2025). These successive assessments and resolutions represent a first step towards a more systematic, evidence-based and adaptive management framework for marine recreational fisheries in Catalonia. However, these measures have so far mainly addressed biological and temporal aspects of MRF management, while the spatial dimension remains largely unaddressed. This is particularly relevant given the increasing spatial overlap between MRF and small-scale fisheries, which may contribute to conflicts between the two sectors.

3.

MRF management advice



In the framework of the continuous monitoring program and the ongoing work within the MRF Co-management Table in Catalonia, ICATMAR proposes to:

- **Maintain and strengthen links with the Marine Recreational Fisheries Co-management Table:** maintain the Marine Recreational Fisheries Co-management Table as a key space for joint discussion and decision-making between the recreational fishing sector, the scientific community and the administration. Participatory processes should continue to be used to identify shared management objectives, discuss scientific results and progressively build consensus around management measures.
- **Avoid the use of management strategies for few iconic species (main target of MRF) and maintain a broad systemic approach:** maintain a combination of minimum catch sizes, species-specific daily bag limits per fisher, and biological closed seasons as complementary management tools. This approach should ensure that these measures are considered jointly with other administrative scales, rather than as independent regulations, taking into account the local biological characteristics and conservation status of each species.
- **Focus on sensitization and education:** MRF has a high potential impact in marine systems and global biomass. More than 100.000 licenses are yearly issued by the Catalan government. The work done in the MRF Table needs to focus also in an educational basis, and the systemic approach will help to this broad objective.
- **Establish a framework that allows the agreed measures to be periodically reviewed** and updated according to the best available scientific data.
- **Introduce a spatial management measure to marine recreational fisheries management:** building on the experience of spatial measures applied in commercial fisheries, consider the specific characteristics, distribution and behavior of marine recreational fishing activity to establish co-designed permanent fishing closures.
- **Improve the understanding of the spatial distribution and overlap of MRF and small-scale fisheries activities:** this overlap is generating some social conflict between recreational and professional fishers. Further understanding of this relationship is therefore needed to support the management of potential conflicts and promote resource management that is compatible with both fishing sectors.

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RESOLUCIÓ ARP/3253/2024, de 10 de setembre, per la qual es fixen les talles mínimes de captura, quotes i vedes d'aplicació a la pesca marítima recreativa a les aigües interiors del litoral de les comarques de Girona per al període 2024-2026

Resolució ARP/3310/2025, de 5 de setembre, per la qual es fixen les talles mínimes de captura, quotes i vedes d'aplicació a la pesca marítima recreativa a les aigües interiors del litoral de les comarques de Tarragona per al període 2025-2027

Resolució ARP/3311/2025, de 5 de setembre, per la qual es fixen les talles mínimes de captura, quotes i vedes d'aplicació a la pesca marítima recreativa a les aigües interiors del litoral de les comarques de Barcelona per al període 2025-2027

ANNEX 1

Annex



			VEDA BIOLÒGICA											
Espècie	Talla mínima de captura (cm)	Captura màx. per llicència/dia	G	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Orada (<i>Sparus aurata</i>)	30	5												
Pagell (<i>Pagellus erythrinus</i>)	23	5												
Pagre (<i>Pagrus pagrus</i>)	30	4												
Palomida (<i>Lichia amia</i>)	80	1												
Penegal (<i>Helicolenus dactylopterus</i>)	-	5												
Raor (<i>Xyrichtys novacula</i>)	15	-												
Salpa (<i>Sarpa salpa</i>)	26	-												
Sard imperial (<i>Diplodus cervinus</i>)	30	3												
Sard, sarg (<i>Diplodus sargus</i>)	25	6												
Serrà (<i>Serranus cabrilla</i>)	18	-												
Sorell blanc (<i>Trachurus mediterraneus</i>)	20	-												
Sorell (<i>Trachurus trachurus</i>)	20	-												
Tallahams (<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>)	40	2												
Tord negre (<i>Labrus merula</i>)	20	2												
Tord pastanaga (<i>Labrus mixtus</i>)	16	2												
Tord verd (<i>Labrus viridis</i>)	30	1												
Vaca serrana (<i>Serranus scriba</i>)	18	-												
Variada, vidriada (<i>Diplodus vulgaris</i>)	20	-												
Verat, cavalla (<i>Scomber scombrus</i>)	28	-												
Xucia (<i>Spicara maena</i>)	14	-												
Calamar comú (<i>Loligo vulgaris</i>)	18	10												
Pop roquer (<i>Octopus vulgaris</i>)	1 kg													
Sípia (<i>Sepia officinalis</i>)	12	15												
Taurons i rajades (Elasmobranchis)	Prohibides													

RESOLUCIÓ ARP/3253/2024, de la pesca marítima recreativa a les aigües interiors del litoral de les comarques de Girona per al període 2024-2026.

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