

## SUWANNEE RIVER ESTUARY NON-MARKET VALUATION STUDIES OF RECREATIONAL SALTWATER FISHERIES

**Roberto F. Koeneke<sup>1</sup>, Olesya Savchenko<sup>1</sup>, Kelly A. Grogan<sup>1</sup>, Christa D. Court<sup>1</sup> and Jana Hilsenroth<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

<sup>2</sup>Toast, Inc., Raleigh, NC, USA

Two non-market valuation studies of recreational saltwater angling associated with changes in environmental conditions in the Suwannee River estuary and on Florida's Nature Coast were recently conducted. The first study used a choice experiment survey to estimate willingness to pay for hypothetical environmental programs resulting in changes in populations of recreationally and economically important fish species (red drum, seatrout, snook) and abundance of seagrass. The results suggest that respondents are willing to pay to prevent declines in populations and abundance of all aquatic resources. However, respondents are only willing to pay for increases in spotted seatrout and seagrasses. The analysis further shows that female respondents, individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher, and those who have visited or fished on the Nature Coast are more likely to pay for an environmental program to reach specific environmental conditions.

The second study employed an angler survey with two delivery methods (in-person intercept survey and online Qualtrics survey) to estimate recreational saltwater angling demand. The travel cost method (TCM) using a random effects negative binomial model was employed to elicit willingness to pay in the face of hypothetical changes to target recreational fish species in the Suwannee River estuary. Preliminary analysis shows that the most sought-after species are catfish, red drum, and spotted seatrout. On average, respondents traveled 35.10 miles (56.49 km) per trip and spent \$321.60 per trip. Also, 53% of respondents would alter the number of trips in response to changes in fish populations, and 38% would make the same number of trips regardless of changes in fish populations.

These results can inform resource management decisions aimed at preserving estuarine and coastal resources on the Nature Coast threatened by the negative impacts of human activities and climate change.

PRESENTER BIO: Roberto Koeneke is a third-year PhD student in the Food and Resource Economics department at the University of Florida. He studies natural resource and environmental economics and focuses on water and coastal resource issues and policy analysis, and regional economic impacts and contribution analysis.