



January 23, 2026

Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Re: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP)
for Atlantic Red Snapper

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

Thank you for your continued commitment and efforts to improve fish conservation in the United States. On November 10, 2025, SCDNR formally submitted an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application requesting a two-month fishing season for Red Snapper in South Carolina, a vast improvement from the two-day federal season in 2025. On January 9, 2026, Mr. Eugenio Piñeiro Soler, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, provided a response letter to the EFP requesting specific data and clarifications to the application. Those have been addressed in the revised EFP which is included here for review.

The Magnuson–Stevens Act (MSA) outlines NOAA’s foundation to review and approve EFP’s. NOAA’s Response letter referenced 50 CFR 600.745(b)(2)(v) and requested that SCDNR provide an expected harvest of red snapper during the proposed fishing season. However, the poor quality of MRIP catch, effort, and discard estimates, compounded by two or three-day fishing seasons for the last nine years, makes it impossible to reasonably determine the expected harvest values for a single wave. In this EFP revision, SCDNR does not provide a specific expected harvest number, but does include management tools including accountability measures to constrain harvest. The SCDNR EFP is requesting to limit harvest to a fixed 62-day harvest season paired with other fishery management tools, e.g. bag and size limits, as well as mandatory angler reporting.

The Southeast states’ EFP’s are specifically designed to be a scientifically sound pathway to break out of the malfunctioning status quo management quandary of the last 2 decades. Working collaboratively with the other three South Atlantic states, we will improve and obtain regionally consistent information necessary to more reliably quantify recreational catch, fishing effort and discards for Red Snapper. Therefore, the request to provide an expected harvest, even if only an estimated number, is fruitless at this initial phase.

We look forward to results of this and the other states’ EFP’s which will inform future management and conservation of the fishery in the South Atlantic region. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to working with you and answering any questions you have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Blaik Keppler".

Blaik Keppler, Deputy Director; SCDNR Marine Resources Division
cc: Dr. Thomas Mullikin, SCDNR Director; Amy Dukes, Regional Fisheries Manager



To:

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office (SERO)
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Sustainable Fisheries Division
263 13th Ave. South
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Attn: Rick DeVictor, South Atlantic Branch Chief
rick.devictor@noaa.gov

Date:

Original Submission - November 10, 2025

Revised Submission - January 23, 2026 (NOAA Preliminary Review attached as Appendix A)

Applicant:

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)
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Charleston SC, 29142

Primary Contact:

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Purpose:

Request that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) be issued to the SCDNR to develop and pilot a state data collection program with the desired long-term intent to implement state management of Atlantic red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*). This EFP, to be requested annually for up to three years, is intended specifically for recreational anglers, including private recreational anglers and state-licensed for-hire operators who possess federal permits for snapper-grouper species. South Carolina's proposed EFP was developed in cooperation with the other three South Atlantic states—North Carolina, Georgia and the east coast Florida—serving as a platform to test tools and strategies to improve recreational data collection by permitting states to have both involvement and flexibility in the management of red snapper.

Specific regulations from which an exemption is requested and why each exemption is required for the experiment to succeed:

The requested EFP is under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), and regulations 50 CFR 600.745 (b) concerning exempted fishing. The NOAA Fisheries SERO Administrator has the authority to approve the EFP sought by this application with the following regulatory exemptions:

50 CFR 622.181(c)(2) Red Snapper: Red snapper may only be harvested or possessed in or from the South Atlantic EEZ during the commercial and recreational seasons as specified in §§ 622.183(b)(5) and 622.193(y). Any red snapper caught in the South Atlantic EEZ during a time other than the specified commercial or recreational seasons specified in § 622.193(y) must be released immediately with a minimum of harm. In addition, for a person on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, the prohibition on the harvest or possession of red snapper applies in the South Atlantic, regardless of where such fish are harvested or possessed, i.e., in state or Federal waters.

50 CFR 622.8 (b) Quota closures: When a quota specified in this part is reached or is projected to be reached, the Assistant Administrator will file a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. On and after the effective date of such notification, for the remainder of the fishing year, the applicable closure restrictions for such a quota, as specified in this part apply. See the applicable ACLs, annual catch targets (ACTs), and AMs sections in subparts B through U of this part for closure provisions when an applicable ACL or ACT is reached or projected to be reached.

50 CFR 622.193(y)(2) Recreational sector: The recreational ACL for red snapper is 22,797 fish. The AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to announce the length of the recreational fishing season for the current fishing year. The length of the recreational fishing season for red snapper serves as the in-season accountability measure. See § 622.183(b)(5) for details on the recreational fishing season. On and after the effective date of the recreational closure notification, the bag and possession limits for red snapper are zero.

Background and Justification for Issuance of an EFP:

SEDAR 73 (2021) for Atlantic red snapper concluded that the population was overfished and that overfishing was occurring; however, the update to SEDAR 73 (2024), when utilizing the ratio of spawning stock biomass to minimum stock-size threshold, indicated that the stock is not overfished and further demonstrated that the stock was progressing toward rebuilding with higher-than-expected recruitment during 2014-2021. The assessment update concluded the overfishing was occurring mostly driven by dead discards in the recreational fishery primarily during the closed season when anglers target other snapper-grouper species that co-occur with red snapper.

The current stock status, based on Secretarial Amendment 59 to the Fishery Management Plan for Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region, indicates overfishing is no longer occurring following the changes to the overfishing proxy. The total annual catch limit (ACL) is 509,000 fish, of which 475,000 fish are attributed to dead discards, allowing for only 6.7% of the total ACL to be harvested. The ACL is then proportioned to sectors, with the recreational

sector receiving 71.93% and the commercial receiving 28.07%. The 2025 recreational fishing season was open for two days (July 11-12) and was based on a recreational ACL of 22,797 fish (~263,815 pounds) or 4.5% of the total ACL. The 2025 commercial fishing season was open for 72 days (July 17 – Sept. 23) and was based on a commercial ACL of 102,951 pounds (~11,203 fish) or 2.2% of the total ACL.

Anglers have been frustrated for years with NOAA Fisheries and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. They have voiced their frustrations at council meetings, advisory panel meetings, and through other outlets including news and social media. One of the most recurring frustrations is linked directly to data collection related to recreational fishing. South Carolina recreational red snapper data are primarily collected through the NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) which does not provide reliable catch estimates for red snapper landings or discards due to the narrow seasonal openings for harvest versus the multi-month wave data collection design, resulting in low intercept rates of anglers and high percent standard errors (PSEs). MRIP cautions use of catch estimates in fisheries management decisions when the PSE is over 30% and does not support the use of catch estimates for fisheries management decisions when the PSE exceeds 50%. For red snapper total harvest estimates in South Carolina, there were years with no available data and in only one year, 2004, were PSEs below 50%. The remaining PSE percentages ranged from 51% to greater than 100%, ultimately making MRIP estimates of recreational landings unreliable and not suitable for use in management. In direct contradiction to MRIP's own guidance, these data were used in SEDAR 73 and in the 2024 updated assessment because no alternative data were available. Similarly, South Carolina's MRIP yearly (1981 – 2025) catch estimates for recreational red snapper are not suitable for use in management, with 13 years providing no available harvest estimates. Additionally, MRIP was not designed, nor does it have the capability to monitor ACL quotas in real time. MRIP, with its reliance on 2-month sampling waves, is also not an appropriate method for estimating harvest during short one- or two-day red snapper seasons. NOAA Fisheries has likewise stated that the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey may be overestimating recreational fishing effort estimates by up to 40%. Additionally, the dead discards, which NOAA previously stated should not be used for management purposes due to high levels of uncertainty, represent the main reason for a small ACL and short fishing seasons. Therefore, MRIP data are not a reliable source for monitoring in-season landings or annual discards of red snapper off the South Carolina coast.

As previously stated, the mini recreational season, or derby-style fishing, is a major frustration for anglers and results in a fishery of "brief duration during which fishers race to take as much catch as they can before the fishery closes" (NOAA Glossary). These short fishing seasons not only decrease economic benefits to coastal communities that rely on recreational fishing, but they also frustrate anglers who will often choose to engage in unnecessarily risky fishing practices such as fishing during poor weather conditions to take advantage of the limited opportunities to harvest red snapper. Invariably, some areas experience good weather, and anglers can fish during the mini season, while others do not and anglers forfeit their harvest opportunity for the year. These derby seasons are the result of having little ACL remaining for harvest due to dead discards of red snapper.

Topping et al. (2019) compared private recreational fishing harvest and effort in the Gulf between a derby season and an extended season. In 2017, the red snapper season was a three-day-long derby season. After discussions among agencies and congressional offices, NOAA Fisheries re-opened the season for an additional 39 days providing an opportunity to examine

angler behavior in each scenario. Daily catch and effort rates were compared between both seasons as well as weather impacts on fishing effort. Daily harvest and effort rates were significantly higher during the derby season compared to the extended season and were a function of length and weather.

The Gulf states have a well-documented management history for Gulf red snapper, with state specific data collections beginning in 2014 and the initiation of Amendment 50 with the desired outcome to give the Gulf states control over their red snapper seasons and management. Similar angler frustrations with increased ACLs but decreased number of days to fish ultimately led to NMFS requesting the Gulf states to apply for EFPs to evaluate the utility of state-based electronic reporting methods and determine their ability to manage harvest. This allowed for harvest of red snapper in federal waters while assessing angler acceptance and the validity of electronic reporting methods. Each state applied and was granted EFPs in 2018 and 2019, which led to Amendment 50A to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf. The implementation of this amendment in 2020 enabled the Gulf states to manage recreational harvest of red snapper based on their constituents' input regarding the establishment of fishing seasons, size and bag limits, and collectively remaining within federal guidelines.

The recreational fishing industry in the South Atlantic is similarly frustrated, as red snapper are a highly sought-after species by private recreational and for-hire anglers. They have faced limited access, while perceiving a steady increase in the availability of red snapper. Additionally, these frustrations are compounded by inadequate data collection for red snapper, both for recreational landings during the shortened seasons and for the high number of discards year-round, which are estimated through MRIP. Furthermore, the recreational fishing industry has contested the one-size-fits-all management approach, currently utilized in the South Atlantic, and has restricted angler access to the resource. To address these concerns, South Carolina is requesting an EFP in coordination with the other South Atlantic states. These EFP applications are the result of numerous meetings between July 2024 and August 2025 between the South Atlantic states and recreational fishing interest groups to review data programs in place throughout the Gulf states and the Pacific coast states, as well as challenges and opportunities for the Southeast. Additional state directors' meetings helped forge a collaborative path forward resulting in the EFPs. While each state's proposal shares a similar focus on improving and enhancing data collections, each is designed to determine the most effective approach for management of recreational red snapper in each state with the intent to evaluate alternative data collection approaches to MRIP. The EFPs would be executed simultaneously with the development of an Amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic.

This EFP application does not propose any exempted fishing activity for the commercial sector. However, recreational data collected through this EFP will provide more precise data that may ultimately have a positive impact on the commercial sector in the future. Currently, the unreliable catch estimates generated by MRIP, specifically the egregious number of dead discards in the recreational sector, are impacting the ACL for the commercial sector since they are being applied to the ABC prior to the sector allocations. More precise and reliable discard data for the recreational sector could be applied to both the recreational and commercial sectors in the future, recognizing that any changes to the allocation or other management approaches would be developed through the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's process.

Goals and Objectives:

SCDNR has three overall goals:

1. Identify the universe of private recreational anglers participating in the red snapper fishery. SCDNR has no accurate method to quantify or identify South Carolina licensed saltwater anglers who fish for red snapper. The lack of a known delineated user group creates a barrier to effectively survey, interview, or otherwise interact with these anglers to gain meaningful data about catch, effort, behavior, or any other aspect of their fishing which leads to high data uncertainty. Through this project, SCDNR will examine its ability to identify the universe of private recreational anglers and better understand those participating in the red snapper fishery.

2. Determine if the state can improve accuracy and availability of private recreational and for-hire catch data of Atlantic red snapper in South Carolina's adjacent federal waters through the development of a pilot electronic data collection program for private recreational anglers and through existing for-hire electronic data collections. This project is intended to test an alternative data collection approach, under an extended fishing season, as opposed to the current derby-style format, and compare the results to MRIP estimates for the same timeframe.

3. Gain beneficial baseline information to inform future state management. This project will collect valuable information about catch and effort data, number of fishery participants, and their general fishing practices and behaviors. It will also allow the agency to gain meaningful information upon which to design or implement a specialized state recreational fishing survey that would provide timely and precise data to supplement MRIP, specifically for reef fish, to enhance management.

The following project objectives and methods support the overall goals:

- Establish a state-issued Red Snapper Harvest Permit. SCDNR has the authority to issue a state permit to private recreational anglers for experimental purposes, which allows an activity which would otherwise be unlawful and establishes effective/expiration dates. Obtaining this permit would be a requirement for participation in fishing activity authorized by the EFP.
- Establish a mandatory electronic data collection program for licensed and permitted private recreational anglers that will accurately attain recreational landings, discards, and effort on red snapper trips off South Carolina. Reporting compliance will be enforced by SCDNR.
- Assess the effectiveness of mandatory electronic private recreational data collection for managing red snapper by monitoring recreational harvest in near real time.
- Continue mandatory for-hire data collections through the electronic logbook reporting program for SCDNR-licensed charter vessels (six or fewer passengers) that also possess a valid SERO South Atlantic Charter/Headboat permit for Snapper Grouper.
- Continue the data pathway from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey to ensure mandatory for-hire data collections through their electronic logbook reporting program for SCDNR-licensed headboats (seven or more passengers) that also possess a valid SERO South Atlantic Charter/Headboat permit for Snapper Grouper.
- Provide private recreational and for-hire anglers with an enhanced opportunity to harvest fish while observing angler behavior under increased access to red snapper by

extending fishing days in federal waters beyond the one to two-day derby fishing days allowed by NOAA Fisheries during the mini-seasons since 2012.

- Evaluate whether recreational estimates collected through the MRIP accurately represent recreational catch and effort of red snapper off the coast of South Carolina.
- Determine if increasing the opportunity to fish for red snapper during longer fishing seasons will or will not increase catch and effort rates and reduce discards compared to short, derby-style fishing day(s).
- Determine angler preferences for trips (e.g., week vs. weekend fishing days, trip start and end times, trip start and end locations) and potential alternative management measures (e.g., bag, size, and season limits). This would be accomplished through analysis of the mandatory data collections paired with post-season surveys to private recreational anglers, including those not captured through mandatory data collections.
- Examine the potential for establishing a permanent private recreational license or endorsement for the privilege of recreational fishing in saltwater to harvest, attempt to harvest, or possess red snapper. This would delineate a subset of licensed saltwater anglers fishing for red snapper from the larger population of anglers. If established in state law, this could be expanded to other species under the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan in the future.
- Collect additional information on length, weight, disposition, and age, when applicable, to assist managers and researchers in evaluating the relative condition of the red snapper population and support stock assessments.
- Provide managers with accurate and near-real-time harvest estimates by sector.

Methods:

Through this EFP, South Carolina licensed private recreational (or otherwise exempt) and for-hire anglers will be allowed to harvest one red snapper per person per day with a minimum size limit of 20 inches total length (matching current state water size regulations) from federal waters out to 200 nautical miles; however, on for-hire trips, the captain and crew will not be permitted to retain a red snapper (i.e., the recreational bag limit will apply only to paying passengers).

The minimum size limit of 20 inches mirrors the size limit in state waters and is proposed here to maintain consistency in regulation and enforcement across jurisdictional waters. Although high-grading can occur regardless of a size limit, current regulations addressing best fishing practices and the requirement for descending devices mitigate those concerns. Undersized fish have a greater chance of post release survival when these devices are used immediately. We anticipate that the minimum size limit proposed here will require the immediate safe release of undersized fish, as opposed to those fish being kept on board until a larger fish is caught under a scenario with no minimum size limit.

Although the target species for the EFP is red snapper, other species within the South Atlantic snapper-grouper complex may be caught and harvested, and participants will be required to follow regulations for those species. All EFP trips must originate and terminate at a South Carolina landing location. SCDNR is proposing that the EFP consist of a 62-day season, which will align with MRIP Wave 4 and the recreational fishing time frames proposed in the North Carolina and Georgia EFP requests. MRIP Wave 4 trends in estimates demonstrate high effort and discard rates. Aligning the red snapper season with Wave 4 would optimize harvest opportunities for fish that may otherwise be discarded and would likely not increase fishing

pressure. Additionally, a longer season will provide anglers with greater flexibility and the opportunity to fish without the current constraints related to derby-style fishing. Furthermore, this time limited opportunity to harvest red snapper will allow for the collection of baseline data on harvest, discards, and effort that would be used as a reference point and later compared with the corresponding MRIP wave estimates as well as historic derby seasons, which typically occurred during Wave 4. This project will test the effectiveness of SCDNR's developed data collection system for monitoring catch in real time, relative to MRIP, under conditions more consistent with MRIP's two-month wave design.

MRIP data has demonstrated an inability to provide viable estimates to use for fisheries management, especially during restrictive harvest periods. The red snapper recreational mini season catch and effort estimates derived through MRIP are not reflective of catch and effort that would occur during a longer season, and any extrapolations of these values would lead to even more unrealistic numbers for harvest and discards. This lack of confidence in MRIP-derived state level catch data precludes the ability to estimate the amount of red snapper expected to be harvested during the proposed activity. SCDNR's EFP is a necessary first step to test data collection methods for more accurate recreational catch, effort and discard data to determine reliable state-specific landings projections. This can then be used to set future fishing seasons with increasing accuracy. This alternative approach to examine the effect of a 62-day season will allow SCDNR the ability to validate the state data collection program with the equivalent Wave. Additionally, CFR (50 CFR 622.193(y)(2)) stipulates that the length of the recreational fishing season for red snapper serves as the in-season accountability measure, and this EFP specifies the recreational fishing season along with the bag and possession limits for red snapper. SCDNR is requesting the extended season for a minimum of one year with no specified amount of red snapper expected to be harvested by licensed and permitted recreational angler during the 62-day season.

SCDNR will utilize existing authority to require licensed private recreational anglers to also obtain a state-issued permit. The Red Snapper Harvest Permit will be categorized as an experimental permit and will authorize anglers to harvest red snapper. State issued permits include conditions for season dates, types of fishing equipment, species to be taken, mandatory reporting requirements, disposition of the catch, and other conditions the department determines necessary. As a prerequisite to obtaining the permit, each recreational angler must possess a valid SCDNR saltwater fishing license. Additionally, pursuant to the requirement in 50 CFR 600.745 (b) (7) and (8) and (d) (7) for authorization to be carried on board and presented for inspection upon request, the Red Snapper Harvest Permit issued by SCDNR through its Go Outdoors platform will include a digital (view only) copy of the EFP issued under this section, providing anglers mobile access to the authorization during their fishing trip.

To improve accurate tracking of catch and effort under the extended season, SCDNR will establish a mandatory trip declaration for all licensed and permitted private recreational angler trips when targeting or retaining red snapper with an associated mandatory reporting requirement. SCDNR will continue mandatory trip-level reporting for both charter and headboat operators. To prevent false inflation of new entrants, for-hire vessels must possess a current and valid South Carolina charter/headboat vessel license and a SERO South Atlantic Charter/Headboat permit for Snapper Grouper both issued prior to January 1, 2026, to participate in this EFP. A digital copy of the issued EFP will be distributed to all eligible South Carolina charter/headboat vessels.

The EFP will allow SCDNR to develop, implement, and evaluate an electronic data collection program for licensed and permitted private recreational anglers. Electronic reporting will be

completed through an application created by Bluefin Data, LLC. This same application will be utilized by South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia state agencies to ensure standardization in data collection forms and methods and allow for cost effective implementation. Bluefin Data specializes in developing electronic reporting platforms for fisheries data and built VESL, the application currently used to collect electronic for-hire data from South Carolina-licensed and federally permitted charter vessels and headboats. Red Snapper Harvest permitted private recreational anglers will be uploaded automatically through a dedicated API between SCDNR and Bluefin Data. This action will initiate an automatic generation of an email to the recreational angler to complete the registration process in the VESL application as a user and acknowledge that, as a condition of their Red Snapper Harvest Permit and participation in the EFP, they must comply with mandatory electronic reporting requirements for any trips targeting or retaining red snapper. VESL is designed to accommodate diverse data collection needs with a user-friendly interface for simple and straightforward data entry. It also provides errors and warnings to prevent incomplete data submissions and alert users to correct or provide missing information before submission. All data collected under this EFP will be internally stored, managed, and processed securely within the agency.

Each licensed and permitted private recreational anglers will be required to declare each fishing trip date in the VESL application no earlier than five days prior to the start of a trip to receive a trip authorization code linked to that individual trip. This code will be directly linked to the post-trip mandatory reporting requirement, which must be completed within 24 hours from the trip departure time. The mandatory report must be completed and submitted prior to receiving an authorization code to initiate a new trip. Anglers will have the ability to cancel any trip declarations prior to starting the trip if the fishing plan changes (e.g., inclement weather, mechanical issues, unforeseen conflict). For instances where non-licensed private recreational anglers (e.g., under 16 years of age) or licensed anglers who do not have access to a smartphone or computer that are fishing under this EFP, alternate trip participants may submit data on their behalf. A method will be included on the mandatory post-trip reporting application for this purpose; additional data fields will be displayed for the designated representative to complete reporting for these individuals. Compliance will be enforced by SCDNR law enforcement. If an officer intercepts a private recreational angler as they are leaving for or returning from trips targeting or retaining red snapper, they will verify authorization codes for that trip. Officers can also take note of for-hire fishing activity (specifically any landed red snapper) to ensure that the corresponding mandatory report is submitted.

During year one of the EFP, absolute harvest and discard values collected during Wave 4 will be provided to NOAA Fisheries. Those absolute values will be provided directly to a designee at the Office of Science and Technology by the end of the subsequent wave. This proposal does not address catch estimates or discard rates for the other four fishing waves. The baseline data collected in year one and during post-harvest season surveys (execution and questions are still being developed) will provide valuable information for the development of subsequent EFP's and aid in the development of a reef fish sampling mode design methodology in the future. SCDNR is concurrently seeking funds to develop and establish a comprehensive reef fish data collection program, which would provide the data necessary to generate catch estimates and discard rates for the full year. If funded, SCDNR would coordinate with the Office of Science and Technology to ensure survey design and implementation would meet the qualifications for sampling and estimation methodology to request NOAA Fisheries certification. However, the generation of data required for such estimates is beyond the scope of this proposal.

Extensive outreach and education will ensure those operating under the EFP understand its purpose and requirements. SCDNR has already initiated communications with recreational

anglers about the EFP application with clear guidance that if an EFP is granted, anglers will be required to obtain and possess valid licenses and permits that will require mandatory reporting. Establishing these expectations early and making our anglers aware will only enhance the agency's ability to build positive momentum and ensure the success of the data reporting program. When the EFP is approved, a more direct promotion of the permit requirements, trip authorization, and reporting requirements will be amplified prior to the fishing season. This will include social media posts, news releases, direct in person communications (i.e. fishing clubs, seminars, public meetings) and at any planned SCDNR event that engages recreational anglers. A dedicated website will include a summary of the program, the purpose of the project, as well as its goals, objectives, and timeline. It will also include links to obtain the Red Snapper Harvest Permit, and instructional videos demonstrating the reporting application (initial setup, trip declaration and reporting) for participating private recreational anglers. Additional supporting materials will be provided that can be downloaded and printed and will include a trip datasheet to assist in complete and accurate reporting, as well as step-by-step instructions to clearly outline the reporting requirements similar to the VESL For-hire User Guide ([Appendix B](#)). SCDNR staff will contact private recreational anglers who obtain a permit to ensure understanding of the permit requirement. Staff will also assist with trip authorization, and mandatory reporting requirements as needed.

SCDNR engagement with the recreational sector during the fishing season will include direct angler outreach efforts to build momentum and ensure compliance. SCDNR staff, including law enforcement, will assist private recreational anglers with mandatory post-trip reporting requirements when red snapper are known to have been harvested or discarded by distributing outreach materials. For validation purposes, staff will attempt to collect trip authorization codes. Additionally, other data elements may be collected including vessel registration numbers, number of anglers, hours fished, number of fish released, fish retained, and any biological data (length, weight, and otoliths) from retained red snapper if possible. There will not be secondary specific dockside sampling to validate reported catches outside of MRIP APAIS samplers intercepting recreational anglers who either harvested or released red snapper.

With any new dependent data collection effort, outreach and education is required to ensure proper implementation. SCDNR has direct experience initiating and executing a successful mandatory charter logbook program. SCDNR staff have demonstrated their ability to achieve high compliance rates within the licensed for-hire fishery, which has been subject to mandatory trip-level reporting requirements since 1993. The most recent three-year average for initial compliance (meeting or exceeding the reporting deadline) for mandatory reports is 77% with compliance increasing further following outreach efforts. Those same staff will be assisting in the outreach and education efforts to the private recreational red snapper anglers, including general assistance with the VESL application, trip authorization submission, and post trip reporting requirements. During year one of the EFP, SCDNR staff will use dockside information collected during the MRIP APAIS as well as additional opportunities for direct engagement with red snapper recreational anglers to evaluate the data collection platform. These interactions will be noted when incomplete reports (i.e. authorization without report or report without authorization) are received. When identified, SCDNR staff will contact anglers to assist with trip submission and reporting in VESL and manually void any authorization codes assigned to cancelled trips. Additional angler outreach will be conducted after the fishing season if an acquired permit has no documented fishing effort. The existing outreach efforts to the for-hire fleet will continue. These outreach actions will not be used to generate or adjust for off frame effort nor have correction factors but rather assist in getting full census data. Establishing and maintaining high compliance rates associated with any mandatory reporting system requires

consistent outreach with dedicated and diligent staff. Additionally, the VESL application is specifically designed to maximize positive engagement and angler experience with a clear and user-friendly format. South Carolina industry leaders are supportive of the project and SCDNR will provide them with outreach information to help disseminate to their members and audiences in support of the project and associated reporting requirements. Leveraging these partners will also have a direct impact on increased compliance.

SCDNR will leverage its charter observer program data to further validate reported for-hire catch. Established in 2025, the charter observer project was designed to better characterize South Carolina charter reef fish fishing behavior, catch, and discard composition. SCDNR biologists ride along on pre-scheduled charter trips to directly observe fishing practices and record catch and discard information. Data collected include the number of anglers, hours fished, number and size of fish retained and released by species, and disposition of fish at the time of release. These data will provide more detailed and accurate assessments on the number and disposition of regulatory discards of red snapper.

The outcomes of the 2026 EFP will provide guidance on the need for, and possible refinement of, future EFP applications in years two and three (calendar years 2027 and 2028).

Data Objectives:

The SCDNR electronic data collection programs, including the newly developed system for private recreational anglers and the existing program for the for-hire fleet, collect data fields specifically designed to determine whether they improve the accuracy and availability of information compared to existing MRIP estimates.

Prior to fishing (trip declaration):

- Name of private recreational angler (email address will serve as login) and associated saltwater license and Red Snapper Harvest Permit number
- Vessel registration number or U.S. Coast Guard documentation number
- Trip date (calendar dropdown to ensure accurate date selection)
- Trip start time (time wheel with am/pm selection)
- Landing location (name of boat ramp/marina)
 - Dropdown list populated by MRIP APAIS landing locations
 - Option to request additional locations if not provided (e.g., private location with a text field to provide address)

At trip completion (post-trip report):

- Trip end time
- Primary depth fished
- Number of red snapper harvested
- Number of red snapper released by fate (alive/dead)
- Hours spent fishing (to nearest quarter hour)
- Habitat fished (artificial reef, natural bottom, mix)
- If reporting on behalf of others: Total number of fishing anglers, including the reporting individual (the number of reported red snapper harvested and/or released will then collectively represent these anglers)

An astric (*) to describe each data field will be provided to explain in detail the required information for each field and the platform will include drop-down functions (i.e. date calendar) to ensure more accurate data collections with a user-friendly interface.

A unique trip identification number will be created for each private recreational fishing trip, and a new trip cannot be initiated without the prior trip's complete and submitted mandatory report. Vessel registration number and trip dates will allow for angler trip consolidation to a single vessel trip and will be used to support SCDNR staff contacting anglers to further assist with trip submission in VESL and mitigate duplicate reporting. Reporting will be implemented in year one; however, decisions on which of the fields above will be included and identified as mandatory are still under consideration.

For-hire electronic data collection elements will continue as currently mandated. The data fields for this reporting requirement will cover the entire trip, including all species encountered, and will be as comprehensive or more precise than the data fields listed above for the SCDNR data collection platform for private recreational anglers.

Utility of the Data:

The results of our proposed EFP will identify the universe of anglers and determine harvest rates for private recreational and state-licensed for-hire anglers in South Carolina when encountering red snapper, offer a comparison to determine if this provides a more timely and reliable method for monitoring red snapper catch, and generate additional biological data to support stock assessments.

The results will also inform fisheries managers in future decisions regarding potential changes to subsequent EFPs and ultimately red snapper management at the state level. SCDNR intends to coordinate with NMFS to determine changes to subsequent EFP applications and whether additional data collection elements or fish species should be added into the mandatory reporting requirements.

Potential Impacts:

Are there any anticipated environmental impacts on fisheries, marine mammals, endangered species, or essential fish habitat?

Recreational fishing occurs during the requested time intervals regardless of red snapper harvest; thus impacts to marine mammals, endangered species, and essential fish habitat should remain the same. Although the EFP may increase the number of trips specifically targeting red snapper, it is not expected to increase the overall amount of recreational fishing effort. The requested EFP would allow for red snapper to be retained that would otherwise have been counted as discards. According to Topping et al. (2019), extending the season could reduce effort and harvest rates, as anglers would have more opportunities to fish and would be less likely to concentrate effort into a short time frame.

Are there any anticipated impacts on target or incidental species?

The EFP does not change the landscape of recreational fishing practices in the South Atlantic during the proposed fishing period nor does it request any exemptions from the regulated fishing practices of the Snapper Grouper fishery. The requirement for descending devices, use of circle hooks, and recommended Best Fishing Practices all apply. The current creel, size, and seasons related to other federally managed species of the South Atlantic are not affected under this EFP. Recreational fishing in the South

Atlantic is open access, therefore a dramatic increase in new recreational participants is not expected because of the EFP. Although the EFP may increase the number of trips specifically targeting red snapper, it is not expected to increase the overall amount of recreational fishing effort since red snapper co-occur with other species targeted during offshore bottom fishing activities.

Discards of red snapper are directly attributed to the current management structure including season and possession limits. This EFP would allow for a portion of previously discarded fish to be retained, thereby converting some discarded fish to landed fish. The proposed EFP season occurs at a time when the rate of discards is higher than any other two-month MRIP wave and when the effort rate is high. These factors allow for optimization of the angling experience without shifting effort to a season where fishing pressure would normally be lower.

What is the potential risk to the Red Snapper stock?

The update of SEDAR 73 (2024) indicated that the stock was overfished and that overfishing was occurring. However, it also indicates that the stock was progressing toward rebuilding with higher-than-expected recruitment. Amendment 59 revised the overfishing proxy which changed the stock status to overfishing is no longer occurring. As indicated in response to the previous questions, the overall amount of recreational fishing that could result in the catch of red snapper should not be affected; as such, the potential risk to the stock is expected to be low.

Why harvest in MRIP Wave 4, which is during the documented spawning season?

Red snapper spawn from May through October in the Atlantic, with peak spawning occurring from June through September. Recreational fishing occurs year-round, regardless of red snapper harvest regulations, but the summer months correspond to higher water temperatures and reduced dissolved oxygen concentration. These environmental conditions can increase physiological stress in released fish and reduce their likelihood of survival (i.e., discards during this period are less likely to survive). By allowing retention of red snapper in Wave 4 fish that would have otherwise been counted as discards and most likely become dead discards, the requested EFP may help reduce discard mortality while providing anglers with greater opportunities for harvest.

Signature of Applicant:



Blaik Keppler
Deputy Director, Marine Resources Division



Amy Dukes
Regional Fisheries Manager

References

SEDAR 73 Assessment. 2021. South Atlantic red snapper stock assessment report. Southeast Data, Assessment and Review. North Charleston, South Carolina.
<https://sedarweb.org/>.

SEDAR 73 Update Assessment. 2024. South Atlantic red snapper stock assessment report. Southeast Data, Assessment and Review. North Charleston, South Carolina.
<https://sedarweb.org/>.

NMFS Fisheries. 2025. Secretarial Amendment 59 to the Fisheries Management Plan for Snapper Grouper, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Region, 263 13th Ave S., St. Petersburg, FL, 33701.

Topping, T.S., M.K. Streich, M.R. Fisher, G.W. Stunz. 2019. A comparison of private recreational fishing harvest and effort for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper during derby and extended federal seasons and implications for future management. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*, 39:1311 – 1320.

Appendices

- A. NOAA Fisheries preliminary review of the SCDNR EFP application.
- B. SCDNR VESL: Overview of For-Hire Electronic Reporting User Guide.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

January 9, 2026

Blaik Keppler
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 12559
Charleston, SC 29422

Dear Ms. Keppler:

On November 10, 2025, NOAA Fisheries received your application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to pilot test state management and data collection strategies for South Atlantic red snapper. We appreciate your commitment and expertise to improving our understanding of this iconic fishery through building valuable federal-state science partnerships, while enhancing fishing opportunities for South Carolina recreational fishermen.

We recognize that the success of the red snapper rebuilding measures implemented over the past 15+ years has created a new management challenge: how to effectively provide fishing access that ensures a satisfying experience while remaining within sustainable limits. Your proposal represents a crucial step toward addressing this. In particular, significant scientific uncertainty within the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data sets for this fishery highlight a significant need for improved partnership and increased generation of data streams to inform scientific advice and management. We are therefore especially interested in, and encouraged by, these EFP applications' potential benefits in support of data collection and fisheries-related research.

As you noted, the EFPs issued to the Gulf of America states in 2018 were foundational, paving the way for a successful state management program the Gulf Council ultimately approved in 2019 and we implemented in 2020. That success was built on collaborative planning, EFP data development, and a shared commitment to preventing overfishing and ensuring clear accountability, consistent with the broader mandates of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). The states worked together to develop proposed state-specific strategies for data collection, monitoring, and allocation, which quickly improved over the first few years of program implementation. While we understand this EFP process will not be identical to that followed in the Gulf, we are encouraged to have the benefit of that experience and value in lessons learned.

We have completed a preliminary review of your EFP application, as required by 50 CFR 600.745(b). To ensure we can move swiftly toward a determination and issuance of the EFP on the requested timeline, we need to work together on a few additional pieces of information to confirm consistency with the MSA and other applicable law.

Attachment A outlines the specific data and clarifications requested in your EFP application to:

- Address the MSA mandates to prevent overfishing and ensure accountability;
- Evaluate the total harvest relative to the overfishing limit and sector allocations; and
- Better understand the new survey methodologies you propose to improve data collection for this fishery, including monitoring of catches and discards.

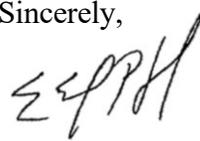


We are ready to work with you to address the information requested further to these points. Please review *Attachment A* and submit the update to your application by January 23, 2026. This will allow us to expeditiously complete our review and proceed to the next steps. It is our shared goal to have a timely approval of this important pilot project and we will strive to accomplish this in advance of the 2026 recreational fishing season to the best of our ability.

Once we determine the applications to be complete and warrants further consideration, we will notice receipt of the applications in the Federal Register with a brief description of each proposal. This provides the public an opportunity to comment, which is required by regulation and a key part of our transparent review process.

Thank you again for your partnership in the management of this important fishery. If you have any questions, or would like to set up a meeting to discuss your application, please contact Andy Strelcheck at (727) 551-5702 or andy.strelcheck@noaa.gov to schedule a discussion.

Sincerely,



Eugenio Piñeiro Soler
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries

cc: Amy Dukes
Anne Hawkins
Samuel Rauch
Andy Strelcheck
Heather Blough
Rick DeVactor

Attachment A

Attachment A: South Carolina EFP Questions – South Carolina EFP Answers in red.

- EFP regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b)(2)(v) explicitly require an application to identify the species (target or incidental) expected to be harvested and “the amount(s) of such harvest necessary to conduct the exempted fishing.” Your EFP application requests a number of days of fishing effort in lieu of a specific landings estimates, but does not specify the amount of red snapper expected to be harvested during these days of exempted fishing. Please include in your application an estimate of the amount of red snapper harvest expected to be associated with this effort.
 - Addressed on page 7: Methods, first paragraph.
- EFPs issued under regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 can exempt activities from federal fishery regulations, but require us to evaluate biological information relevant to the proposal, including “any anticipated impacts on the environment, including impacts on fisheries, marine mammals, threatened or endangered species, and [Essential Fish Habitat.]” Your EFP application states your proposed project will not impact the environment, including fisheries, and that the potential risk to the South Atlantic red snapper stock is expected to be low. To assist us in conducting the required supporting analyses, please clarify in your application how your proposed project is consistent with Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements and further explain conclusory statements about any impacts on target or incidental species.
 - Addressed on page 6: Methods, last paragraph; and page 12: Potential Impacts, question/answer no. 2.
- The South Atlantic Council has allocated 71.93% of the red snapper annual catch limit to the recreational sector and the remaining 28.07% to the commercial sector. Your EFP application does not propose any exempted fishing activity for the commercial sector. Please clarify, or affirm, that your request to authorize the exempted fishing activity you propose does not include any changes to the existing management measures for the commercial fishery, with a season that is currently expected to open the second Monday of July.
 - Addressed on page 4: Background and Justification for Issuance of an EFP, last paragraph.
- Your application indicates you will examine the effects of a 61- or 62-day season, which would align with MRIP waves 3 (May 1-June 30), 4 (July 1-August 31), or 5 (September 1-October 31). NOAA Fisheries will need to publish a *Federal Register* notice and accept public comments once your application is complete. We will also need to prepare environmental analyses before a decision on your EFP is made. We expect this to take until early-May 2026, and recommend that you specify either wave 4 or 5 as your preferred start date for the EFP.
 - Addressed on page 6: Methods, last paragraph.
- We encourage you to work closely with NOAA Fisheries’ Office of Science and Technology to provide expanded details regarding your survey design and implementation. Some suggestions of clarifying information related to your surveys include:
 - How often do you intend to generate catch estimates? Weekly? Monthly?
 - Addressed on page 8: Methods, third paragraph.
 - Do you intend to conduct dockside sampling to validate reported catches, in addition to inspections by law enforcement?
 - Addressed on page 9: Methods, second paragraph.
 - How will information from the dockside validation survey be used? Specifically, is the information a component of a capture-recapture estimation approach or is the intent to adjust for off frame effort (i.e., trips made by anglers that had the app

and didn't report (<100% compliance) and/or anglers who failed to register for the app?

- Addressed on page 9: Methods, last paragraph.
- How will the angler intercepts surveys at the completion of a trip be administered? (e.g., probability sample, opportunistic or other non probability approaches)
 - Not applicable.
- How will data be managed, processed, and estimated? Will data be provided to ASMFC/ACCSP?
 - Addressed on page 8: Methods, first paragraph.
- How will you ensure compliance with app-based reporting remains high? Similar survey designs in the Gulf (e.g., Snapper Check) indicated compliance was as low as 31% during initial years of survey design development.
 - Addressed on page 9: Methods, last paragraph.
- Will survey methods include correction factors for non-reporting - either trips not declaring or trips not completing final reports? If yes, please explain.
 - Addressed on page 9: Methods, last paragraph.
- Please clarify if trip declarations will be required for every angler on a trip or only the vessel owner/captain. To reduce the reporting burden, consider requiring one person on the vessel to report total catch and effort rather than every angler.
 - Addressed on page 7: Methods, fourth paragraph, page 8: Methods, second paragraph, and page 11: Data Objectives, first paragraph.
- Your application indicates the survey will only be conducted during the red snapper season. How does the EFP application address out-of-season red snapper discards?
 - Addressed on page 8: Methods, third paragraph.
- Your application discusses the benefits of possibly reducing effort and discards. You also propose a 20 inch minimum size limit. To assist us in conducting the required supporting analyses, please explain in greater detail the anticipated effects of imposing a minimum size limit. We recommend you consider the impacts of high-grading fish and the rationale in Amendment 28 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan for eliminating the 20-inch TL size limit.
 - Addressed on page 6: Methods, second paragraph.
- To the extent possible, please explain how data collection and sampling efforts may be coordinated with other states in the region in order to maximize utility of information gathered through the EFPs for enhancing scientific and management programs, advancing our collective understanding of this public trust resource, and improving best available scientific information.
 - Addressed on page 4: Background and Justification for Issuance of an EFP, second paragraph, and page 7: Methods, first paragraph, and page 8: Methods, first paragraph.
- Your application identifies two regulatory exemptions. We recommend also including a request for an exemption from 50 CFR 622.193(y)(2) - **Recreational sector**. *The recreational ACL for red snapper is 22,797 fish. The AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to announce the length of the recreational fishing season for the current fishing year. The length of the recreational fishing season for red snapper serves as the in-season accountability measure. See § 622.183(b)(5) for details on the recreational fishing season. On and after the effective date of the recreational closure notification, the bag and possession limits for red snapper are zero.*
 - Addressed on page 2: Specific regulations.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources



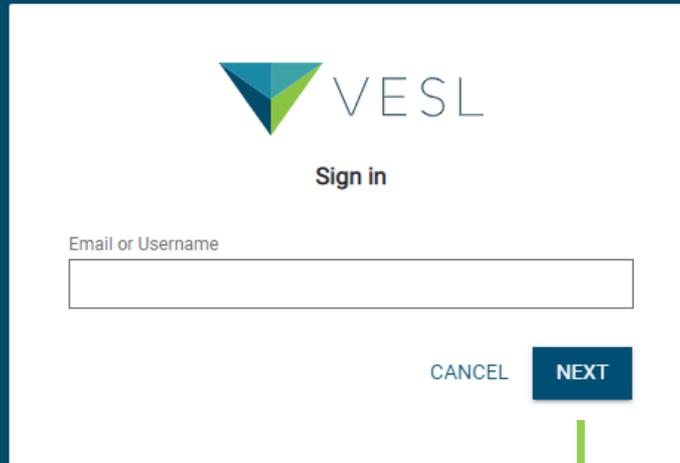
Overview of For-Hire Electronic Reporting

For questions contact:

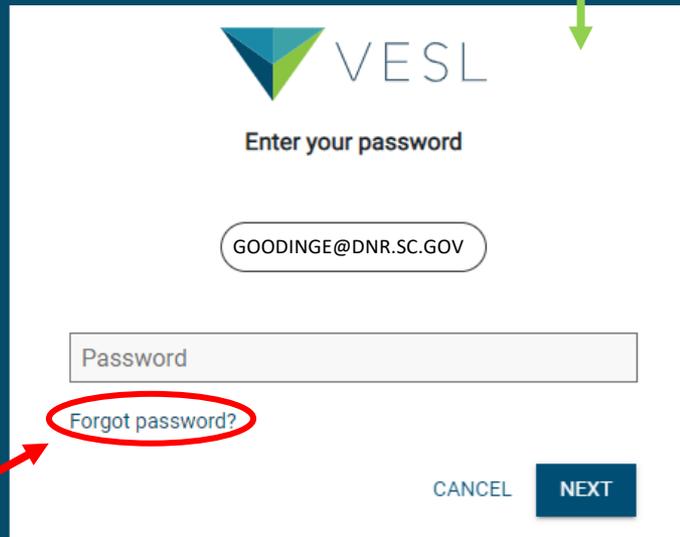
Sydney Bates
Recreational Data Coordinator
(843) 953-8748

Elizabeth Gooding
Fisheries Statistics Section Manager
(843) 953-0119

CharterReporting@dnr.sc.gov

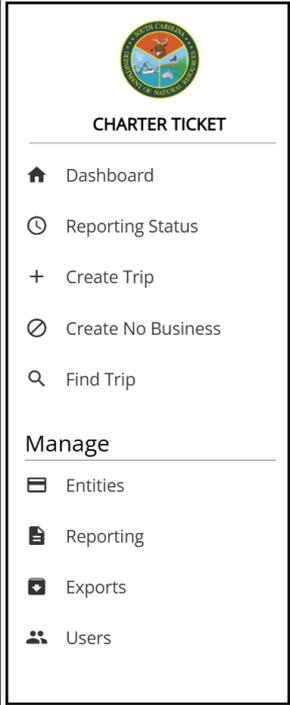


The image shows the VESL sign-in screen. At the top is the VESL logo, which consists of a stylized triangle with blue and green segments. Below the logo is the text "VESL" in a large, sans-serif font. Underneath that is the heading "Sign in". There is a text input field labeled "Email or Username". At the bottom right of the form are two buttons: "CANCEL" and "NEXT". A green arrow points from the "NEXT" button down to the next screen.



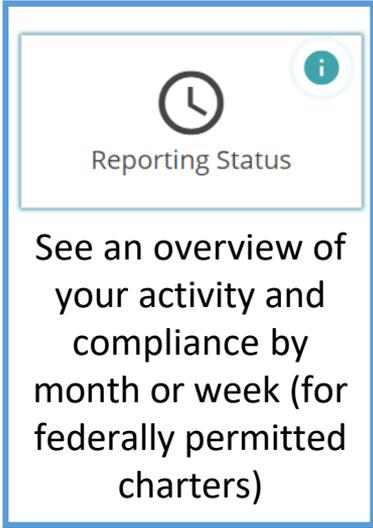
The image shows the VESL password entry screen. At the top is the VESL logo. Below it is the heading "Enter your password". There is a rounded rectangular field containing the email address "GOODINGE@DNR.SC.GOV". Below that is a password input field labeled "Password". At the bottom left, the text "Forgot password?" is circled in red, with a red arrow pointing to it from the bottom left of the slide. At the bottom right are two buttons: "CANCEL" and "NEXT".

If you forget your password, click here to reset it. Support@vesldata.com will send a link to the email address we have on file for you. Be sure to check your junk folder and add VESL support to your known contacts to avoid lost emails.



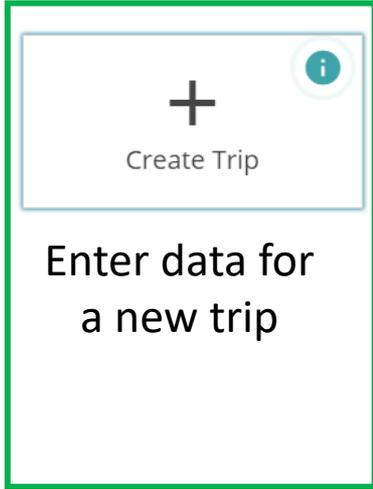
CHARTER TICKET

- Dashboard
- Reporting Status
- Create Trip
- Create No Business
- Find Trip
- Manage
 - Entities
 - Reporting
 - Exports
 - Users



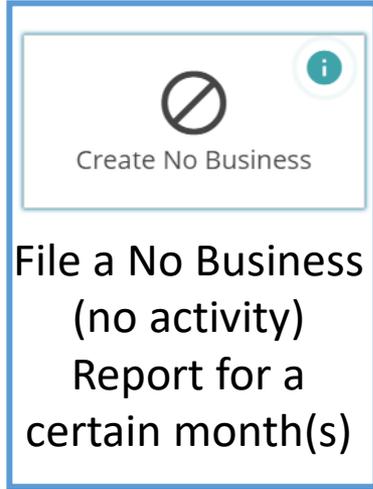
Reporting Status

See an overview of your activity and compliance by month or week (for federally permitted charters)



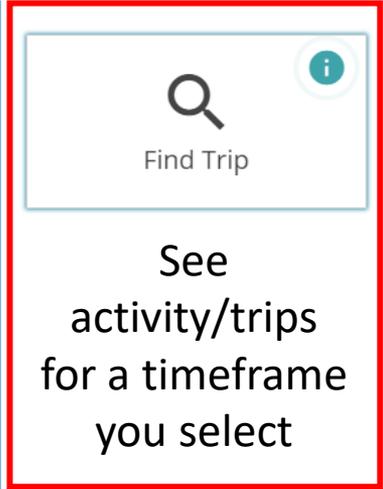
Create Trip

Enter data for a new trip



Create No Business

File a No Business (no activity) Report for a certain month(s)



Find Trip

See activity/trips for a timeframe you select

These tabs will take you to the same page.

By clicking on these 3 stacked bars, a drop-down navigation menu will appear to the left. The options on this menu are the same as the tabs on the Dashboard (homepage). You can use this menu while on any screen in the site.



We'll explore each of these tabs/pages, with the current working page noted in the upper left throughout the tutorial. Remember that the Reporting Status and Create No Business are the same page – we'll cover submitting no activity in Reporting Status.

In the Reporting Status page, you'll see an overview of the entire fiscal year. Remember DNR's fiscal year is **July 1 → June 30**.



Reporting Status



FILTERS

Vessel

LEGEND

Period is out of compliance and past deadline

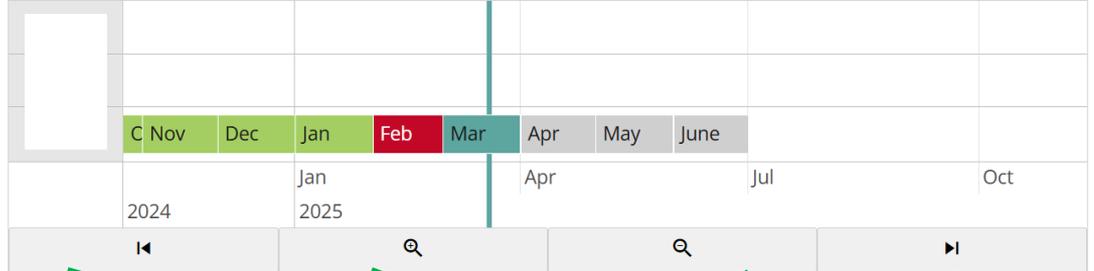
Reporting period is over, but not past the deadline

Current filing period

Period is open for filing

Period is compliant

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY



NOTIFICATIONS [1]

- February: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

Use these buttons to change the view of the compliance timeline.

2025 - October

10/01/2024 - 10/31/2024

7 SUBMITTED TRIPS

2025 - November

11/01/2024 - 11/30/2024

1 PENDING TRIP
10 SUBMITTED TRIPS

2025 - December

12/01/2024 - 12/31/2024

11 SUBMITTED TRIPS

2025 - January

01/01/2025 - 01/31/2025

NO BUSINESS FILED

UNDO NO BUSINESS

2025 - February

02/01/2025 - 02/28/2025

CREATE FIRST TRIP

FILE NO BUSINESS

2025 - March

03/01/2025 - 03/31/2025

CREATE FIRST TRIP

FILE NO BUSINESS



Create No Business

FILTERS
Vessel

- LEGEND
- Period is out of compliance and past deadline
 - Reporting period is over, but not past the deadline
 - Current filing period
 - Period is open for filing
 - Period is compliant

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

	C Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	
	2024		Jan	2025		Apr		Jul	Oct

NOTIFICATIONS [1]

February: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

2025 - October	7 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - November	1 PENDING TRIP	
2025 - December	11 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - January	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - February	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - March	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - April	--	FILE NO BUSINESS

If you don't fill out a trip entirely, you'll have an incomplete trip saved. If this is your only trip for a month, you'll be marked out of compliance. You can click on the message info (blue letters) to edit, complete and submit trips.

Click this to report no activity for a particular month. You can click it again to undo the action. This can also be done for future months if no activity is expected.



Reporting Status



Create No Business



Federal Permits:

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

2024w39	2024w40	2024w41	2024w42	2024w43	2024w44	2024w45
6	11	16	21	26	1	6
October 2024				November 2024		

NOTIFICATIONS [0]

Week	Trips	Actions
2025 - 2024w39 09/30/2024 - 10/06/2024	2 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w40 10/07/2024 - 10/13/2024	3 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w41 10/14/2024 - 10/20/2024	1 SUBMITTED TRIP	
2025 - 2024w42 10/21/2024 - 10/27/2024	3 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w43 10/28/2024 - 11/03/2024	4 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w44 11/04/2024 - 11/10/2024	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2024w45 11/11/2024 - 11/17/2024	1 SUBMITTED TRIP	
2025 - 2024w46 11/18/2024 - 11/24/2024	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS

If you purchase federal permits, your reporting requirements will automatically switch to weekly rather than monthly, as shown.

As long as you report your trips through VESL to SCDNR, your reports will be sent to SERO automatically.

Federal Permits:



Reporting Status



Create No Business

The charter shown on the right is compliant for SCDNR, but out of compliance for SERO.

If you do not report one week in a month, you will be compliant for SCDNR, but out of compliance for SERO and will not be able to renew your federal permits.

This also applies for pending trips. If you only have pending trips, and no submitted trips for a week, you are out of compliance for SERO.

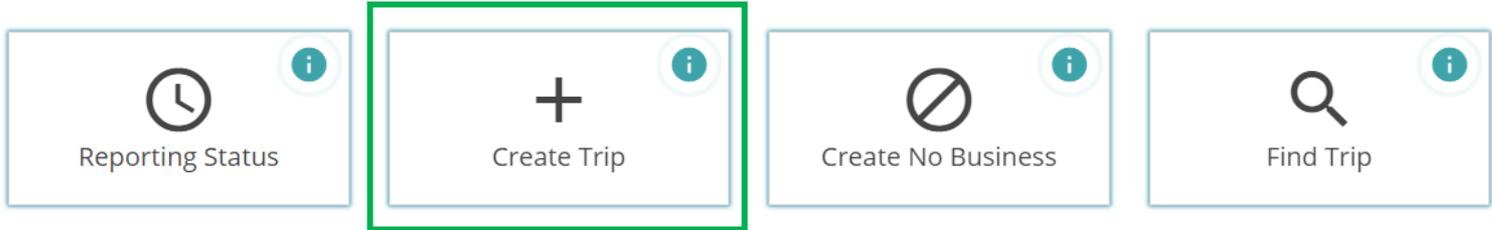
COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

2024...	2025w01	2025w02	2025w03	2025w04	2025w05	2025w06	2025w07	2025w08	2025w09
Jan 2025						Feb			Mar

NOTIFICATIONS [1]

25w06: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

2025 - 2024w52 12/30/2024 - 01/05/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w01 01/06/2025 - 01/12/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w02 01/13/2025 - 01/19/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w03 01/20/2025 - 01/26/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w04 01/27/2025 - 02/02/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w05 02/03/2025 - 02/09/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w06 02/10/2025 - 02/16/2025	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w07 02/17/2025 - 02/23/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w08 02/24/2025 - 03/02/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w09 03/03/2025 - 03/09/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w10 03/10/2025 - 03/16/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS

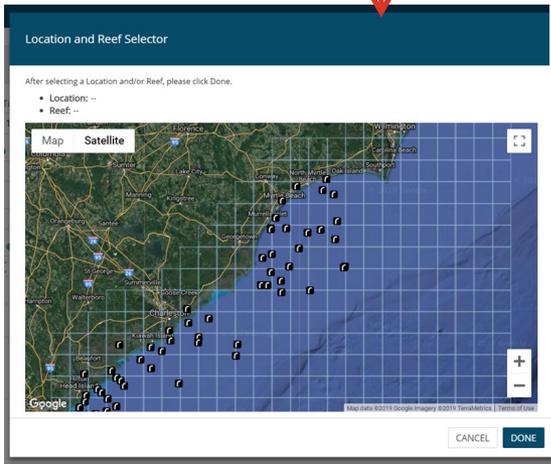
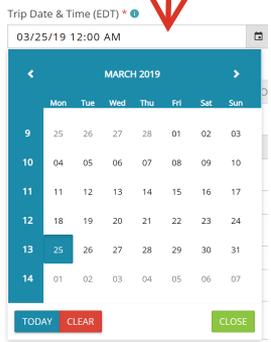


Now we'll take a look at creating a trip.

Remember, your reporting requirements are trip-level, so if you make multiple trips in a day, you'll need to submit a trip for each one.

+
Create Trip

Use these icons to enter trip date & time and location. Smaller windows will appear to help you select.



New Trip

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ   Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ  

Vessel * ⓘ # of Anglers * ⓘ # of Crew * ⓘ

Location

Departing Marina * ⓘ Location ⓘ  Locale ⓘ

Reef ⓘ 

Fishing Activity

Min Depth * ⓘ FT Max Depth * ⓘ FT Hours Fished * ⓘ HRS Target Species ⓘ

Fishing Methods * ⓘ

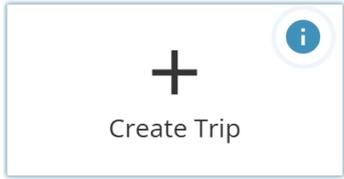
Hours fished = time actually spent fishing. Excludes running time, etc.

Scroll up/down for hrs/mins
Click to switch AM/PM

Next, we'll cover choosing your fishing location and the interactive map.



Common Problem: Overlapping Trips



Sometimes when creating a trip, the end date accidentally jumps a couple days. You will then be unable to submit a trip later in the week during the trip dates accidentally listed.

Pending

1 error must be resolved before submitting.
• The trip start to trip end time overlap an existing trip for this vessel.

This is the error message you will see when trying to submit a trip within dates from extended trip.

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ 09/12/24 02:00 PM

Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ 09/12/24 05:00 PM

To check for this error: go to reporting status to review trips and see dates. See date change below.

*Remember: this trip is still pending and needs to be submitted when overlap is fixed!

TRIP #	TRIP DATE & TIME	TRIP END	LAST MODIFIED	STATUS
3	09-12-2024 02:00 PM	09-12-2024 05:00 PM	03-24-2025 02:12 PM	Pending
2	09-10-2024 09:00 AM	09-17-2024 12:00 PM	03-24-2025 02:11 PM	Submitted

Staff can see pending trips, so if you are having trouble clearing an error, call and let us walk you through it.

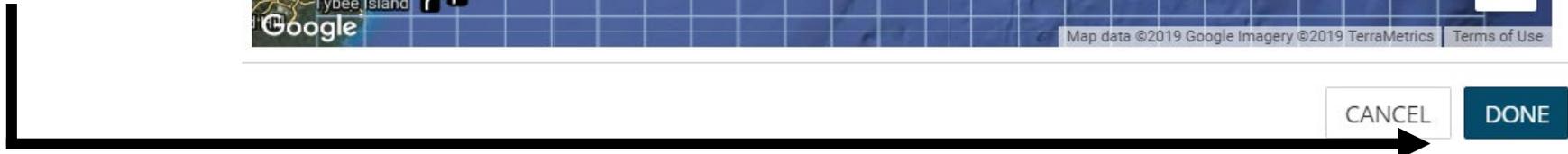
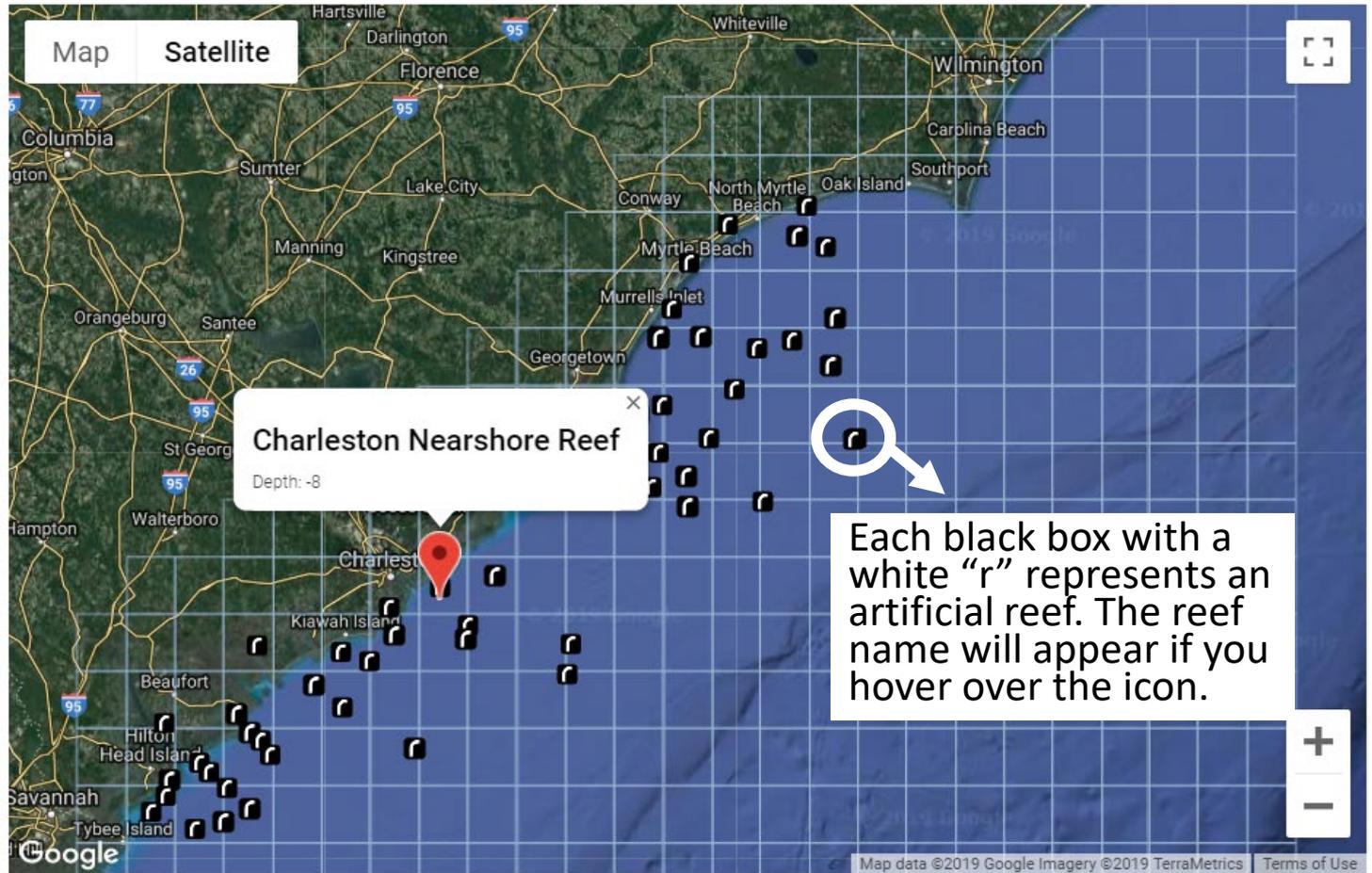
Location and Reef Selector

After selecting a Location and/or Reef, please click Done.

- Location: 32, 79 - B2 ✕
- Reef: Charleston Nearshore Reef ✕

Note: if you click on the wrong box or reef, click the red "x" next to the location/reef name.

Each of these boxes represents a 10x10 sq. mile area. Select the box in which most of the fishing activity occurred. If you also fished on an artificial reef, click on the black box that represents it. You'll see the location and reef name populate **above**. Then click done in the bottom right. If no fishing took place on a reef, select your location and then click done.





New Trip

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ

Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ

Vessel * ⓘ

of Anglers * ⓘ

of Crew * ⓘ

Location

Departing Marina * ⓘ

Location ⓘ

Locale ⓘ

Reef ⓘ

Marina/landing used.
If name doesn't appear,
enter "Not listed"

of Crew: total number
of crew aboard during the
charter. This includes the
captain and any mates.
This does not include the
anglers.

If you consistently target
multiple species, please
alternate them per trip.

Fishing Activity

Min Depth * ⓘ FT

Max Depth * ⓘ FT

Hours Fished * ⓘ HRS

Target Species ⓘ

Fishing Methods * ⓘ

Now that all of your effort information is entered and accurate, click NEXT to continue to the catch section of the trip. If you have any errors or an incomplete section, you'll get a warning pop up so you can correct it before moving on. →

+
Create Trip

h
kept from

If a zero value applies to a field, the number "0" must be entered

Clicking drop down arrow lists commonly caught species

- 223 total options
Type to filter
- Amberjack, Greater
168689
- Croaker, Atlantic
169283
- Drum, Black
169288
- Drum, Red
169290
- Flounder, Southern

Details

Catch Details

Species	Kept	Lbs Kept	Released Alive	Released Dead
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

If this is the only species you caught

If you need to add additional species

Details

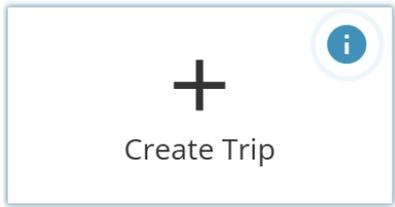
Catch Details

^ COLLAPSE MULTI-ENTRY × CLEAR ALL

Species	Kept	Lbs Kept	Released Alive	Released Dead
× Amberjack, Greater	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Croaker, Atlantic	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Drum, Black	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Drum, Red	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Flounder, Southern	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

This drop down allows for a species favorite list to enter repeatedly caught species easily



Details

Catch Details

Species ¹ Kept ¹ Lbs Kept ¹ Released Alive Released Dead

☰ [Dropdown] [Dropdown] [Dropdown] LBS [Dropdown] [Dropdown]

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

Edit (blue pencil) or delete (red trash can) species info

SPECIES	KEPT	LBS KEPT	RELEASED ALIVE	RELEASED DEAD
  Croaker, Atlantic	3	3.00 lbs	0	0
Additional species, click here 				

SAVE SUBMIT

Your trip will not be saved and you won't be compliant unless you SAVE, then click SUBMIT!!





Reporting Status



Create Trip



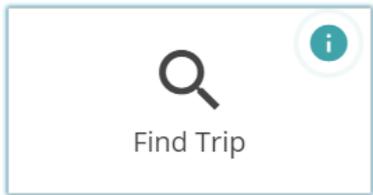
Create No Business



Find Trip

Now let's explore Find Trip.

This icon allows you to see activity/trips for a timeframe you select.



You can sort trips by any of these categories by clicking on the column header

<input type="checkbox"/>	TRIP # ^	TRIP DATE & TIME ^	TRIP END ^	LAST MODIFIED ^	STATUS
<input type="checkbox"/>	919	12-17-2024 09:00 AM	12-17-2024 01:00 PM	12-18-2024 12:53 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	918	11-29-2024 12:30 PM	11-29-2024 04:30 PM	11-29-2024 10:42 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	917	11-12-2024 12:30 PM	11-12-2024 04:30 PM	11-12-2024 05:34 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	916	11-02-2024 12:00 PM	11-02-2024 04:00 PM	11-03-2024 12:18 AM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	915	11-02-2024 07:30 AM	11-02-2024 11:30 AM	02-12-2025 02:32 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	914	11-01-2024 08:30 AM	11-01-2024 12:30 PM	12-04-2024 03:57 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	913	10-28-2024 09:00 AM	10-28-2024 12:00 PM	10-28-2024 07:35 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	912	10-26-2024 01:00 PM	10-26-2024 05:00 PM	03-18-2025 12:58 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	911	10-26-2024 08:30 AM	10-26-2024 12:30 PM	10-26-2024 03:48 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	910	10-25-2024 08:30 AM	10-25-2024 12:30 PM	02-12-2025 02:33 PM	

First Previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Next Last

*All times are in Eastern Time

FILTERS

Vessel
Test Vessel (SCXXXX... x

Date Range ⓘ
This Month

License ⓘ
100001

Status ⓘ
All

Status ⓘ
All
Deleted
Pending
Submitted

Date Range ⓘ

- Last 12 months
- Last 30 days
- This Week
- This Month
- This Year
- Last 12 months
- Year + Month
- Custom

By clicking on Date Range dropdown, you can select any time period you'd like to see your data appear for. You can also filter by Status. If you accidentally delete a trip, it can always be recovered.

Eye icon = view
Pencil icon = edit

HELP & SUPPORT

Browser address bar: <https://vesldata.com/user/dashboard>

Navigation bar: CHARTER TICKET DASHBOARD

Utility icons: Bell, User, Help (?), Profile

Reporting Status

Create Trip

Create No Business

Find Trip

South Carolina DNR Support

Phone: 843-953-8748

Email: charterreporting@dnr.sc.gov

FAQs: [Help Center](#)

VESL SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK

[VIEW KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS](#)

[TERMS OF USE](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#)

Utility icons: Bell, User, Help (?), Profile

Sydney Bates
bates@dnr.sc.gov

[CHANGE PASSWORD](#)

[SIGN OUT](#)

Frequently Asked Questions can be found here!

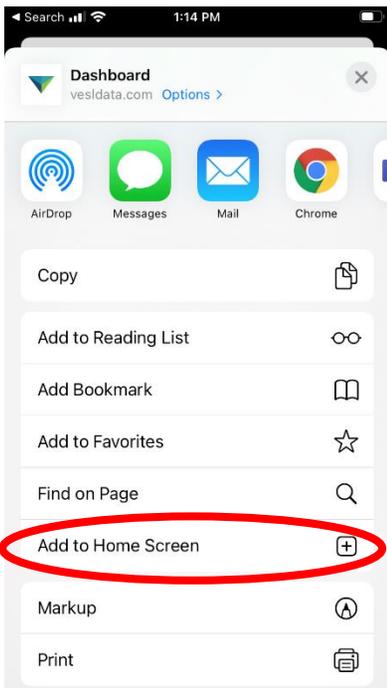
For help with reporting process, how-to, permits etc., contact here for SCDNR - Sydney Bates

Unfortunately, as of now, the VESL app is not compatible with SCDNR. These steps show you how to pin VESL to your homescreen as an app.

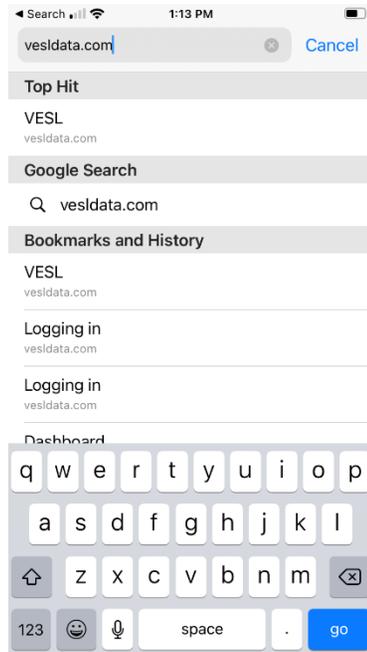
Pinning VESL to Your Home Screen



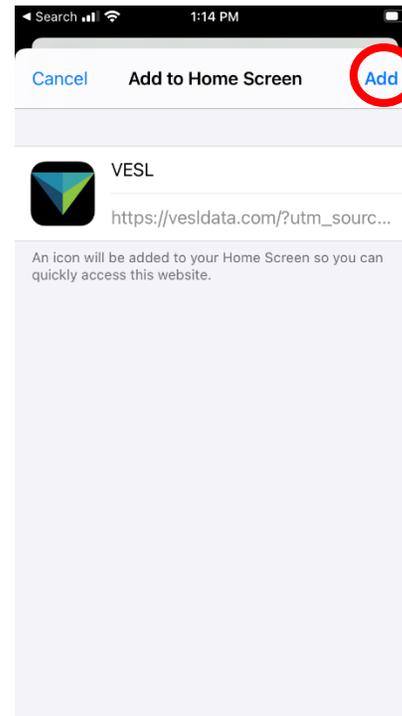
Step 1: Use Safari for Apple products and Chrome for Android products.



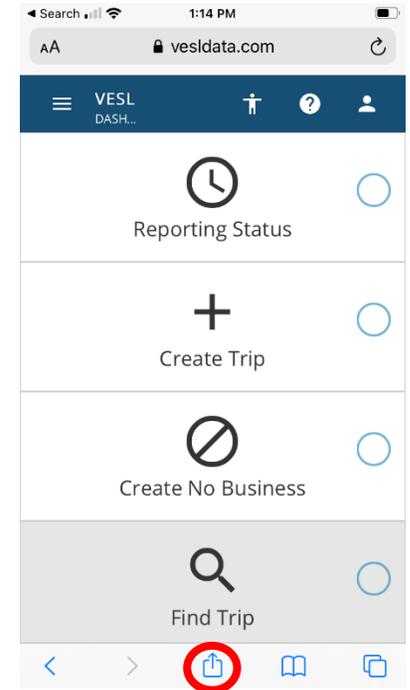
Step 4: Scroll down until you see “Add to Home Screen,” circled above.



Step 2: Type vesldata.com into the browser.



Step 5: Click “Add,” circled above.

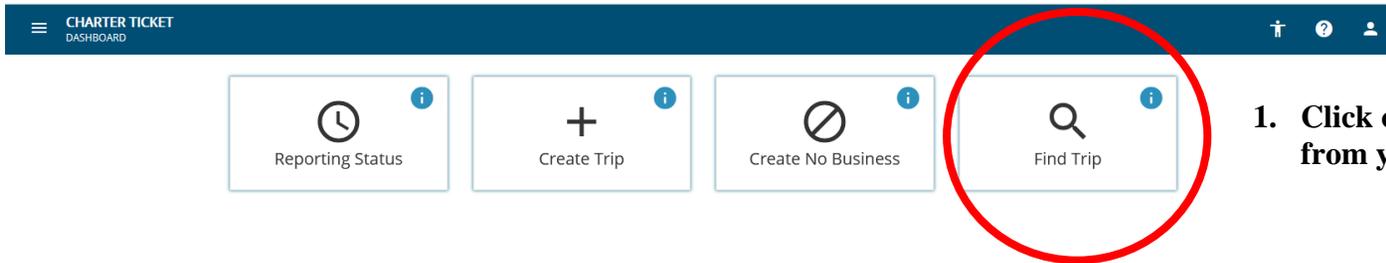


Step 3: When the dashboard appears, click on the symbol circled above.



Step 6: Access VESL from your home screen. App will appear as shown above.

Downloading Your Trip Data



1. Click on "Find Trip" from your dashboard.



2. Enter your vessel number.

3. Choose a date range.

FILTERS

Vessel

Date Range

Status

ACTIONS

<input type="checkbox"/>	TRIP #	TRIP DATE & TIME	TRIP END	LAST MODIFIED	STATUS
No Trips found for the set filters					

*All times are in Eastern Time

4. If interested in all trips within date range, click this box. Otherwise click boxes to the left of specific trips needed.

5. Click "Download Selected Items." Click on Excel (if preferred) and click "OK."