



SAFMC Release

Participant Recognition Program



- About the Program -

The SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program (PRP) is designed to celebrate the achievements of our project participants. With every released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper our participants record, they're helping us better understand the size and survival rates of released fish and supporting their snapper grouper fishery. We're excited to thank them for all their efforts!

Important Information:

- Some ways in which participants may be recognized include being featured in the SAFMC Release newsletter and mentioned in the annual data summary. See below for more details.
- We do not share sensitive information through this program. Some information that could be shared includes name, number of releases, species released, fish lengths, and a photo of a release.
- Participants who meet a milestone will be notified via email, using the email address associated with their SciFish account.
- If there is a tie for a milestone, all individuals will be recognized, except the Release Champion milestone. See below for more details.
- Some milestones require length validation photos. Photo guidance can be found at the end of this document.
- All milestones reset at the end of the calendar year.
- To opt out of the recognition program, email meg.withers@safmc.net.

2026 Milestones

Milestone	What to Do	Recognition
Referral Program	Refer three fishermen to the SAFMC Release project. When signing up, they must say they heard about the project from you.	• Virtual certificate of appreciation • \$25 West Marine e-gift card 
First Fish	Submit your first SAFMC Release entry (this calendar year)	• SAFMC Release Shallow Water Grouper ID ruler and non-offset circle hooks • Your name in the SAFMC Release newsletter  
Silver Jig	Submit 5 SAFMC Release entries	• Rope-handle bucket with sticker • Your name in the SAFMC Release newsletter 
Golden Jig	Submit 20 SAFMC Release entries	• Sea to Summit 13L dry bag • Your name in the SAFMC Release newsletter 
Diamond Jig	Submit 45 SAFMC Release entries	• RTIC Cooler (30 can) • Your name in the SAFMC Release newsletter 
Quarterly Top Submitter	Submit the most SAFMC Release entries Jan-Mar, Apr-Jun, Jul-Sep, Oct-Dec. Resets each quarter. Must include at least one length validation photo per trip for trip's entries to qualify. Examples at end of document.	• \$50 West Marine e-gift card • Highlighted in the SAFMC Release newsletter 

2026 Milestones

Milestone	What to Do	Recognition
Species Spotlight	Submit a less-commonly recorded project species: Yellowfin Grouper, Black Grouper, Red Hind, Rock Hind, Coney. Entry must include a length-validation photo. Examples at end of document.	• Species Spotlight sticker(s) - one per species • Photo highlighted in SAFMC Release newsletter 
Size Matters	Submit the smallest and/or largest fish of a project species. Entry must include a length-validation photo. Examples at end of document.	• Aluminum ruler - one ruler per person who meets milestone • Name in SAFMC Release Annual Data Summary 
Release Champion	Submit the most entries in a calendar year. If participants tie, the first person to submit the most entries wins. Must include at least one length validation photo per trip for trip's entries to qualify. Examples at end of document.	• Shimano spinning rod & reel • 2026 Release Champion sticker • Highlighted in SAFMC Release newsletter • Name in SAFMC Release Annual Data Summary 

For information about the PRP or its milestones, please reach out to Meg Withers at meg.withers@safmc.net

Keep reading for Sea Grant Milestones



Fisheries in Focus

Photo Challenge

Sea Grant has partnered with SAFMC Release to recognize participants who include exceptional photos with their submissions! Photos are automatically considered for each of the milestones below, unless a participant has opted out of the PRP. Participants who meet a Sea Grant photo milestone **earn a Sea Grant thank you packet and with permission, their photo will be highlighted in the SAFMC Release newsletter.**

Quarterly Photo Milestone

Best Fishing Practices Category

From hook to release, a released fish faces a host of challenges to its survival. Using your Best Fishing Practices improves the chances of your releases surviving. For a full description of these practices, visit the [Best Fishing Practices webpage](#). To be eligible for this milestone, the photo submitted with your SAFMC Release entry must clearly demonstrate at least one best fishing practice. The best photo each quarter will be chosen by Sea Grant staff.



Annual Photo Milestones

Best of the Best...Fishing Practices Category

At the end of the year the very best photo demonstrating best fishing practices will be selected for this milestone. Photos demonstrating more than one best fishing practice will have an advantage. Participants with a photo selected for the quarterly Best Fishing Practices milestone will be eligible for the annual milestone, but their previously selected photo will not be eligible to earn an additional award.

Grouper ID Category

Shallow water grouper can sometimes be difficult to identify. However, each species typically has a defining feature that separates it from others. The participant who submits a picture that best highlights a species-specific characteristic will meet this milestone. Find characteristics to highlight in this [Shallow Water Grouper ID Guide](#).

Photo of the Year Category

Submit a Release entry containing a particularly exceptional, captivating image! Photos will be ranked according to technique and creativity. Technique includes image attributes like lighting, resolution, composition, etc. Creativity is up to you!

For questions regarding the Sea Grant milestones, please reach out to Andrew McMains at andrew.mcmains@scseagrant.org.

Length Validation Guidance

One way to strengthen the data contained in your SAFMC Release entries is to provide photos that can be used for length validation. They are also required for some PRP milestones.

To be used for length validation, a photo must show the entire fish on a ruler or next to an item of known length (e.g., soda can) and must be taken from directly above the fish.



Shows the whole fish on a ruler; taken from a bird's-eye-view



Shows the whole fish on a ruler; taken from a bird's-eye-view



Photo taken at an angle.



Doesn't show the whole fish.

For other submission resources, check out our [Data Collection Tips document](#). Reach out to Meg Withers at meg.withers@safmc.net with any questions.