



Citizen Science

Citizen Science Program Update

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel
April 2026

Citizen Science Program Activities

New additions to CitSci Team



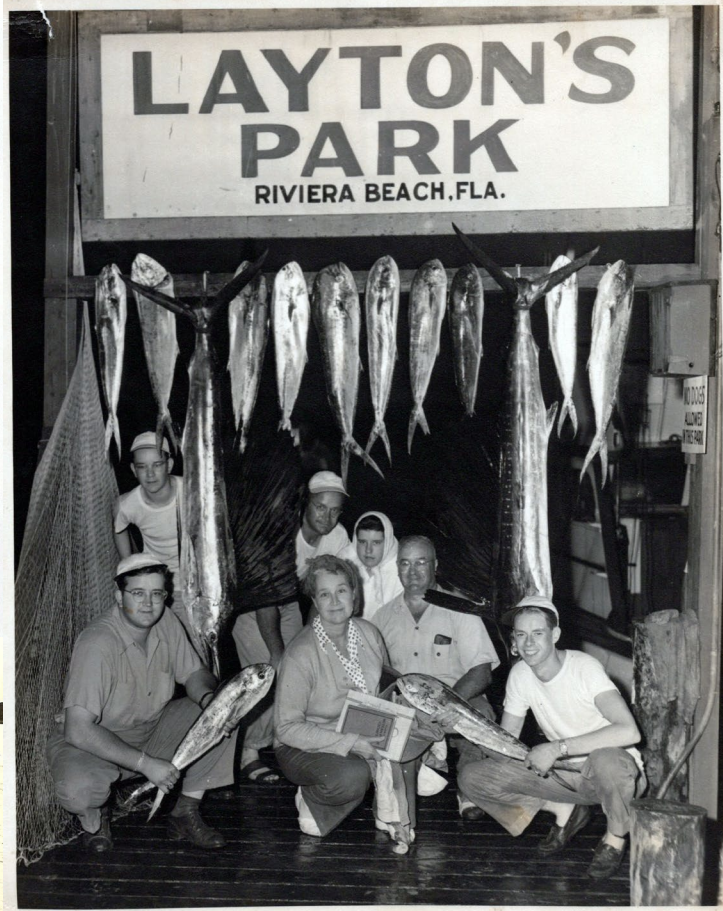
Kate Chatman
CitSci Project Assistant

Taylor Mickey
SAFMC CitSci / SCDNR Intern

Project Updates



Thank you for helping
spread the word!



FISHstory

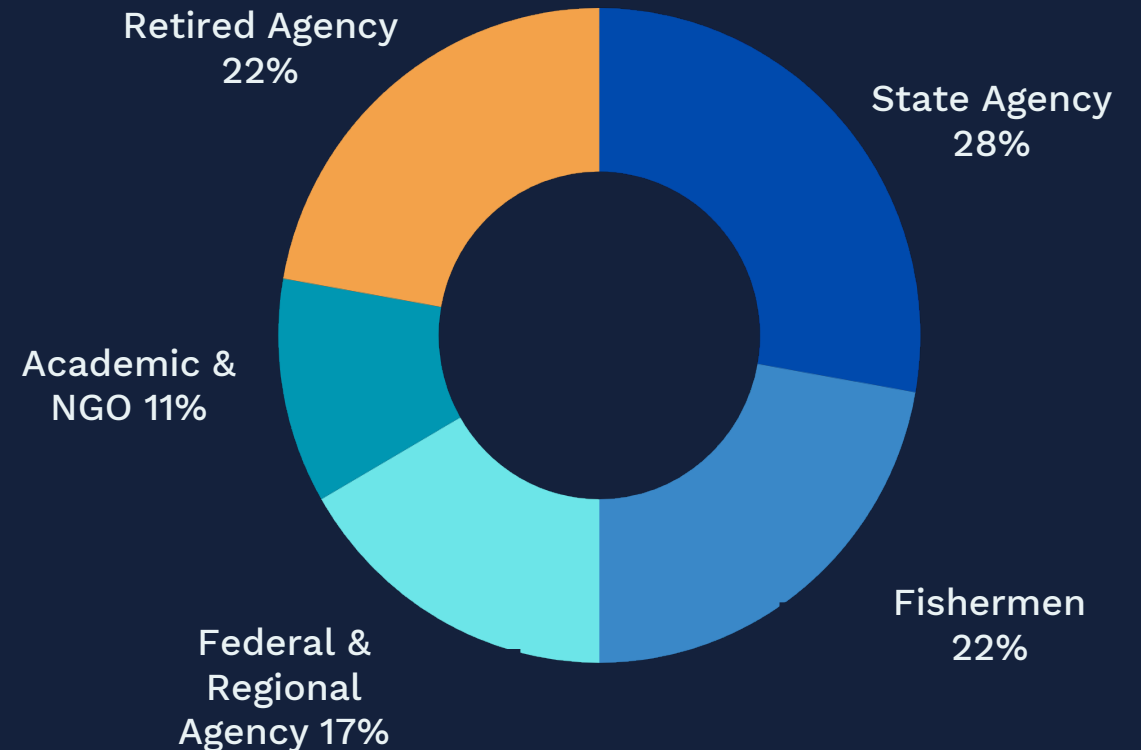




FISHstory Validation Team



Review subset of photos
classified by Zooniverse
volunteers



23 active team members



FISHstory Validation Team



Validation Team verified
400+ photos

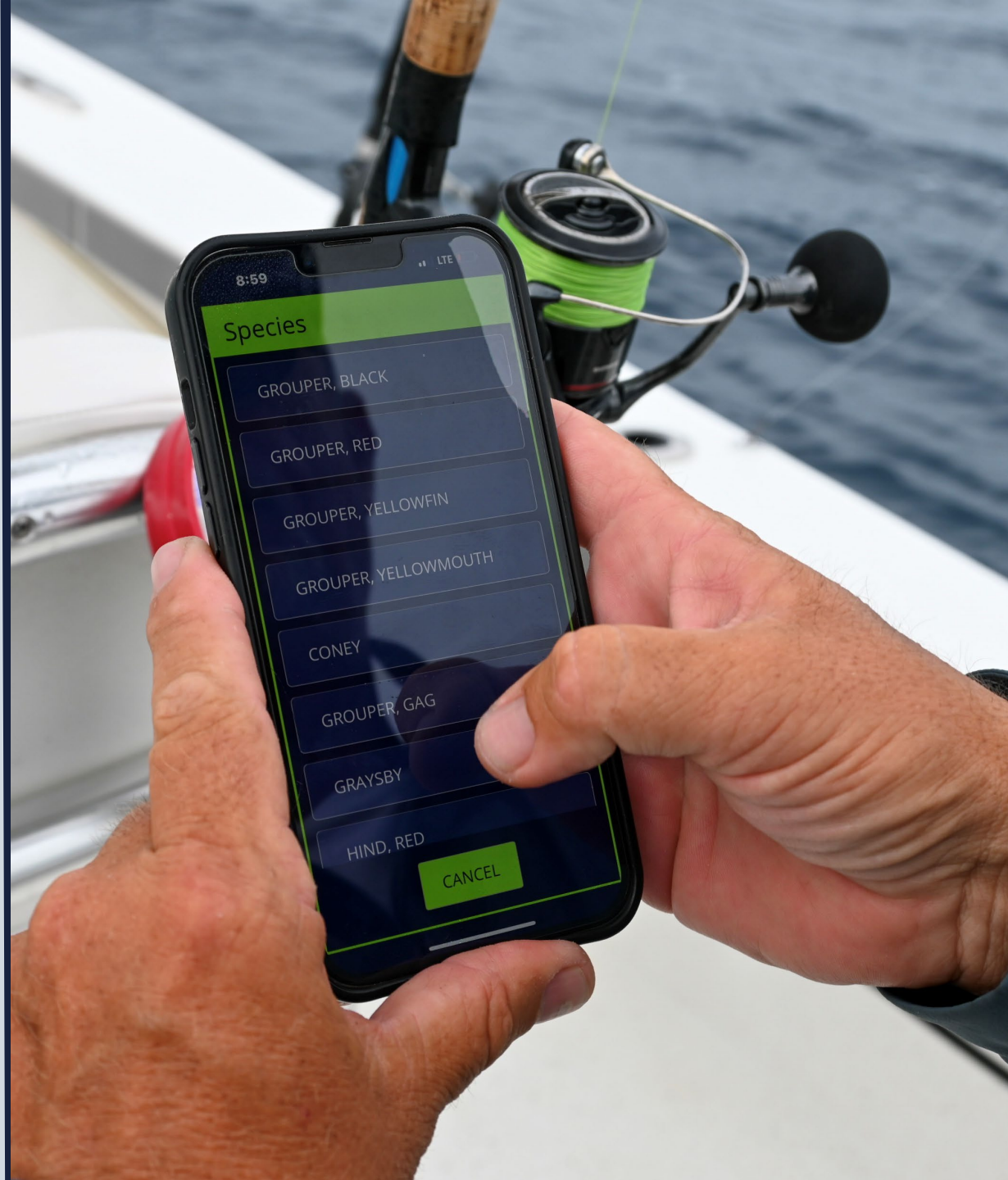


Validation Team being
used to calibrate
Zooniverse volunteer data

SAFMC



Release



Updates



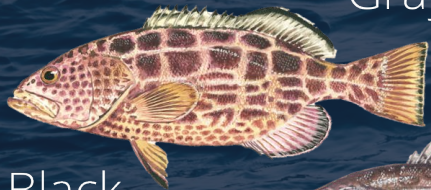
Red Snapper



Scamp



Graysby



Black



Yellowmouth



Gag



Rock Hind



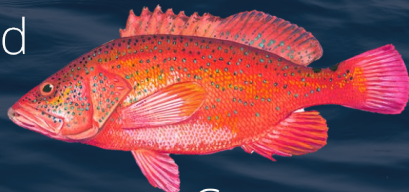
Yellowfin



Red Hind



Red



Coney

Participants recording released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper in SciFish app

Continued outreach, including collaboration with Best Fishing Practices initiative

2025 SAFMC Release Data Summary

2026 Participant Recognition Program & Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo



SAFMC Release 2025 Annual Data Summary



SAFMC Release 2025 Data Summary



All data summarized below were submitted to SAFMC Release in 2025.

Where Entries Came From

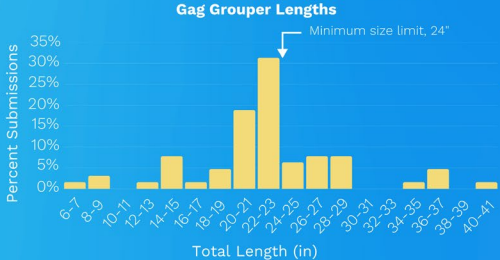
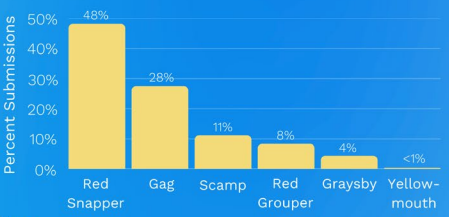


The majority of releases recorded in 2025 were caught on recreational trips (64%), followed by charter (26%) and headboat (10%).

Most submissions came from South Carolina (46%), followed by North Carolina (31%) and Florida (23%). No Georgia submissions in 2025.

Species Submitted and Lengths

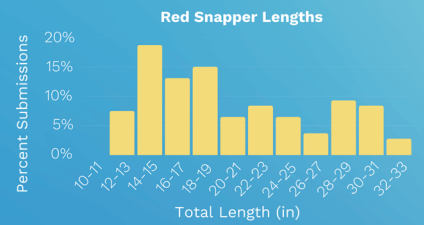
Red Snapper was the most commonly recorded species in 2025, followed by Gag. Red Snapper and Gag have been the most commonly submitted species since all project species were incorporated in 2022. Check out previous data summaries [on our webpage](#).



Gag
Smallest: 7 in
Largest: 41 in
Average: 23 in
Average depth caught: 88 ft



Red Snapper
Smallest: 12 in
Largest: 32 in
Average: 20 in
Average depth caught: 88 ft

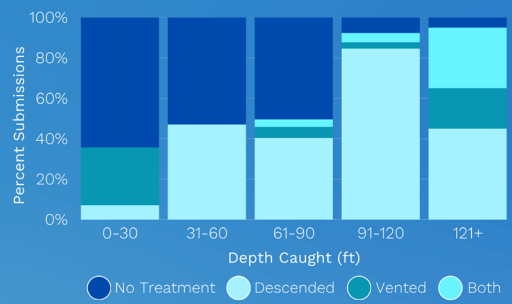
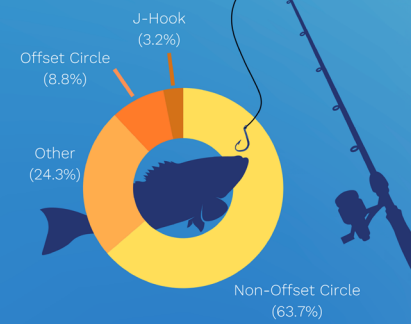


Shark Depredation, Hook Type, and Release Treatment



~2% of recorded releases experienced shark depredation

Non-offset circle hooks were the most frequently recorded hook type in 2025. This is great because these are less likely to hook fish in lethal areas, like the gills. 'Other' hooks, which includes jigs, were the second-most commonly recorded hook type. About 94% of recorded releases were hooked in the jaw. For hook regulations, visit the [Best Fishing Practices webpage](#).



Generally, as depth caught increases, so does the percent of releases being treated for barotrauma, such as being descended, vented, or both. This makes sense because the risk of barotrauma increases with depth caught. Knowing the signs of barotrauma is key to knowing when to assist your fish.

Participant Recognition Program Milestones

In the SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program (PRP), participants are recognized for meeting project-specific milestones, such as submitting the largest and/or smallest of each species, recording the most species, and submitting the most releases overall. Find updated 2026 milestones in the [2026 PRP Milestones document](#), but for now, check out some of the 2025 PRP winners below.

Size Matters



Red Grouper
Smallest: 11 in
Vincent Gatto
Largest: 23 in
Victor Tucker



Gag
Smallest: 7 in
Chris Kimrey
Largest: 41 in
Jake Harmon



Scamp
Smallest: 16 in
Chris Kimrey
Largest: 35 in
Jake Harmon



Graysby
Smallest: 10 in
Vincent Gatto
Largest: 17 in
Nigel Bowers



Red Snapper
Smallest: 12 in
Nigel Bowers
Graham Free
Mark McWaters
Largest: 32 in
Mark McWaters
Victor Tucker

Around the Reef

Jake Harmon is in the lead!

To win this milestone, a participant records information for all **11 project species**. Jake has submitted valuable information on six species! This milestone is being replaced in 2026 with the Species Spotlight milestone. Check out the [2026 PRP Milestones Document](#) for details.

Release Champion

Nigel Bowers is our 2025 Release Champion!

Huge congratulations to Nigel for submitting an impressive 65 entries this year. His champion status is well-deserved!

Thank you to all our SAFMC Release participants for sharing what they see on the water.



Julia Byrd
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Have questions? Drop us a line.
Discover more on our [webpage](#)

Meg Withers
meg.withers@safmc.net



SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program (PRP)

SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program

The PRP aims to thank SAFMC Release participants for their contributions to the project and recognize them for their achievements.



SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program (PRP)

SAFMC Release 
Participant Recognition Program

Thank you for your guidance!



SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program (PRP)

2026 Milestones



Referral



Quantity of
Submissions



Species
Diversity



Smallest &
Largest



Photo
Highlights





Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo



Sea Grant wants best fishing practices gear in fishermen's hands



SAFMC Release wants more entries that can be used for validation

Rodeo Structure



May - July



4 entries/month



8 entries/month if include ruler



2 names drawn by Sea Grant/month!



Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo



We could use your help in spreading the word!

If helpful, we have flyers printed for you to take.

Also available on Release Rodeo webpage.

A flyer for the Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo. The top section features the event title "SEA GRANT SOUTH ATLANTIC RELEASE RODEO" in large, bold, white and orange letters, with the dates "MAY 1 - JULY 31" in a small orange banner below it. The tagline "HOOK GIVEAWAYS WHILE SUPPORTING YOUR FISHERY!" is in white. The flyer is divided into two columns. The left column contains sections: "What is the Release Rodeo?" (describing the challenge from May 1 to July 31, 2026), "Why Jump In?" (listing benefits like supporting the fishery, easy data submission, confidentiality, and giveaways), and "Getting Started" (a 4-step process from visiting the webpage to recording releases). The right column contains sections: "Release Rodeo Webpage" (with a QR code and URL gulfseagrant.org/reef-fish-extension/safmc-release-rodeo/) and "SAFMC Release Webpage" (with a QR code and URL safmc.net/citizen-science/safmc-release/). The bottom of the flyer includes contact information: "Sea Grant Rodeo: bryan.fleuch@uga.edu" and "SAFMC Release: meg.withers@safmc.net".

<https://gulfseagrant.org/reef-fish-extension/safmc-release-rodeo/>



Keep up with projects
& the Program!

safmc.net/citizen-science-program/



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