



# Citizen Science

## **Citizen Science Program Update**

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Law Enforcement AP  
January 2026

# SAFMC Citizen Science Program

## Why Citizen Science?

- Long standing data needs
- Fishermen want to help
- Citizen science provides the opportunity

## Program Development

- 2016 workshop & blueprint
- Stakeholder Action Teams
- Program approach & SOPPS



# Citizen Science



Advancing science and  
increasing trust, one  
project at a time

# **SAFMC Citizen Science Program Approach**

- Fill data gaps & address research needs
- Complement existing programs & partnerships – NOT compete or replace
- Intentional project design - direct application/use in management and stock assessments
- Fishermen & Scientist collaboration
- Umbrella to support projects – internal & external

**SAFMC**  
**Release**



**Reel**   
**Record**   
**Release** 

**Citizen Science**

Powered by ACCSP's SciFish



# Citizen Science Projects



# SAFMC Release

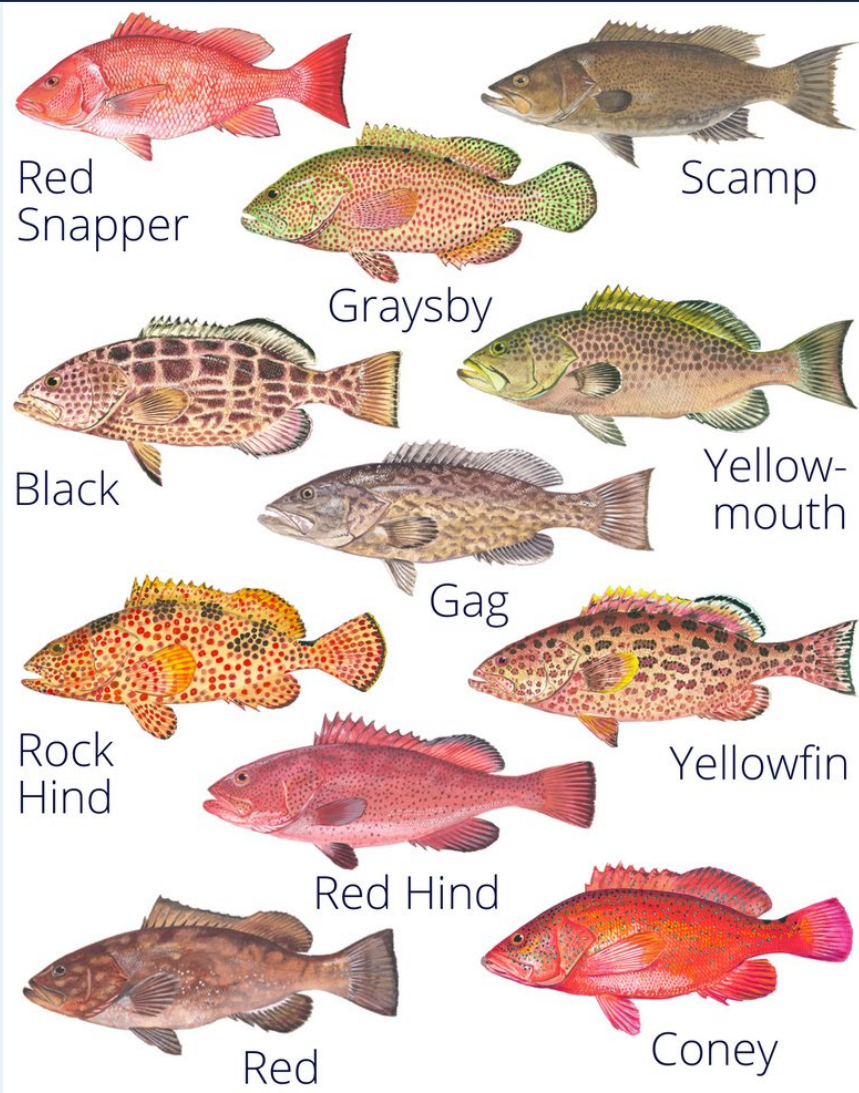


Working with commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen



© Mark McWaters

Collecting data on released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper using the SciFish mobile app





# Data Fields & Usage

Data collected include:

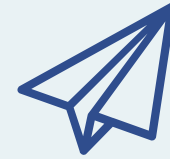
- Species
- Depth caught
- Fish length
- Optional location
- Hook type & location
- Shark depredation
- Venting & descending device use

Learn more about the size and survival rates of released fish.

# Communication Strategies



Partnerships



SAFMC Release  
newsletter



Tackle shop visits



One-on-one emails



Seminars &  
Conferences



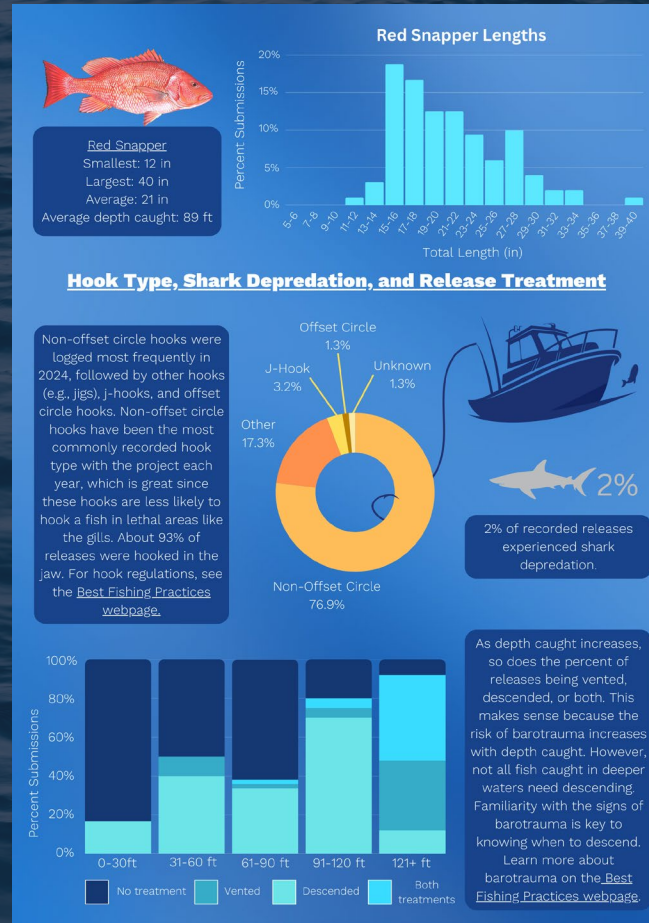
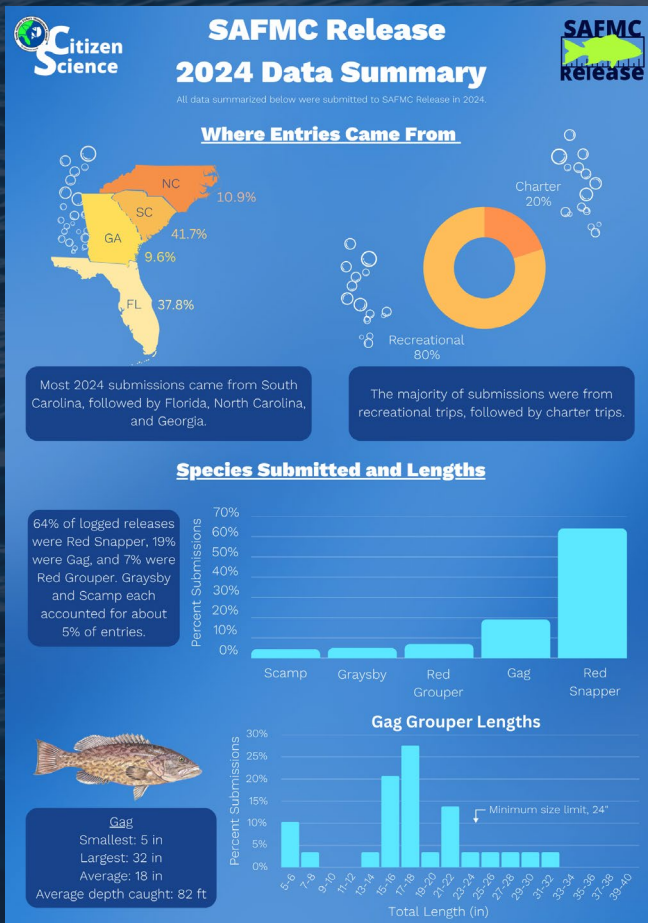
Recognition program



Social media

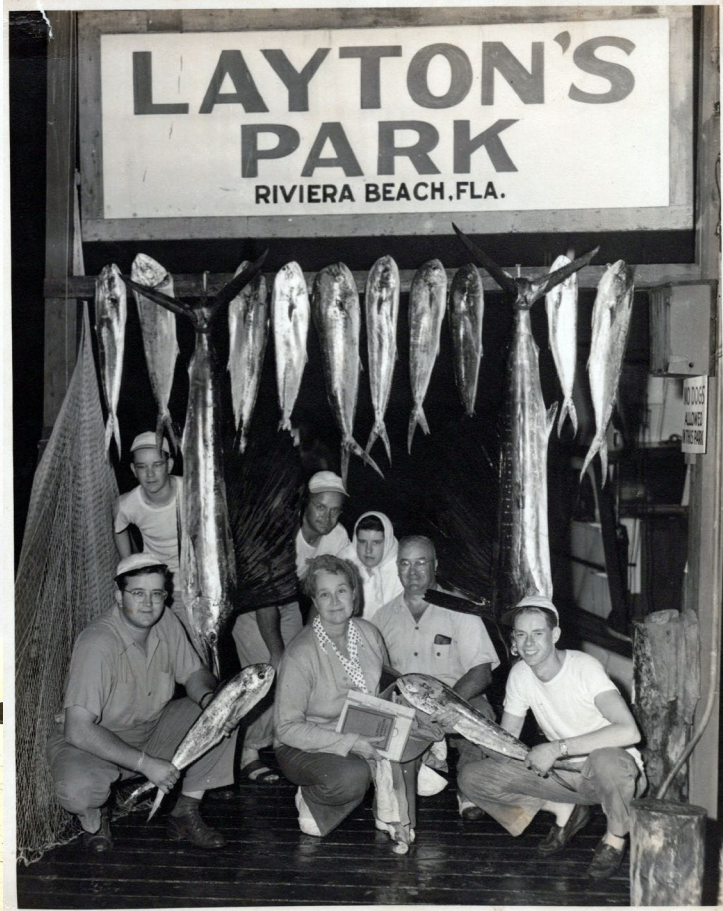


# 2024 Data Summary



## Summary includes:

- Release submissions by state & fishing sector
- Species submitted
- Length compositions
- Release treatment by depth
- Shark depredation
- Hook type & location
- 2024 Participant Recognition Milestones



# FISHstory



# Project Components

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Digitizing & archiving historic fishing photos



Estimating for-hire catch composition using the online crowdsourcing platform Zooniverse  
Validation Team verifies identifications



Developing method to estimate fish length in historic photos outside of Zooniverse and estimating size composition for key species

# Project Findings To Date

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Over 2,300+ photos have been digitized & archived from the South Atlantic from the 1940s-1990s  
Looking for more photos from the Carolinas



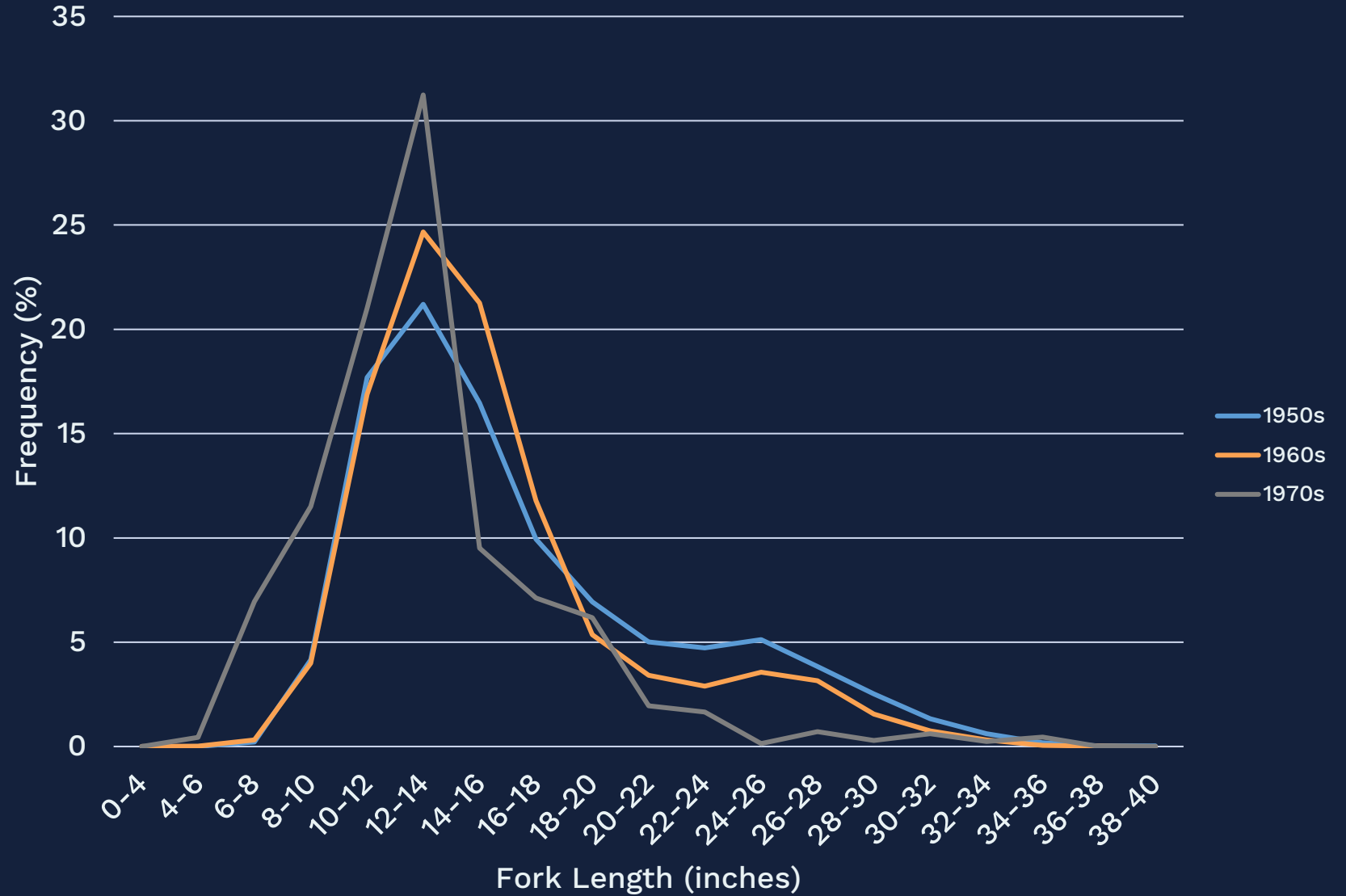
Over 4,000 volunteers analyzed 1,950 photos in Zooniverse  
Validation Team reviewed 250 photos  
Analysis underway by NC State analytical team



All King Mackerel & Red Snapper measured in current photo archive  
Red Snapper length compositions were recommended for use by SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop Panel  
King Mackerel length compositions are being updated & will be presented at next SEDAR South Atlantic King Mackerel assessment



Red Snapper  
FISHstory  
length  
compositions  
by decade





# SMILE Project

- Led by the Reef Environmental Education Foundation
- Partner with divers to collect length info on data limited species
- Laser-mounted Olympus underwater cameras
- Field testing in FL Keys
- 3 year pilot project complete; additional year of funding secured
- [SMILE presentation](#) – SAFMC Oct Seminar Series





Keep up with projects  
& the Program!

[safmc.net/citizen-science-program/](http://safmc.net/citizen-science-program/)



Julia Byrd  
CitSci Program Manager  
[julia.byrd@safmc.net](mailto:julia.byrd@safmc.net)

Meg Withers  
CitSci Project Coordinator  
[meg.withers@safmc.net](mailto:meg.withers@safmc.net)