

**Meeting Report**  
**Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel**  
**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**  
**October 4-5, 2022**

The Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel (AP) met October 4-5, 2022 in Charleston, SC to discuss outreach and communications topics relevant to Council programs, projects, and products.

The AP approved minutes from the November 2020 meeting and the agenda for the October 2022 meeting. Opportunities for public comment were provided and no verbal or written public comments received.

Following introductions and welcome by Spud Woodward, Chair of the Council's Outreach and Communication Committee, and Scott Baker, AP Chair, the OC AP received presentations and provided recommendations on the following topics:

**1. SAFMC Website Update and Social Media Analytics**

Council staff provided an update on the Council's new website, launched earlier this year, and provided analytics for both the website and the Council's social media outlets. The Council currently uses Google Analytics for the WordPress website and Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter social media platforms.

Website analytics included the number of visitors, page views, bounce rates, and session duration for the website. A total of 40,000 plus users have visited the new website over 100,000 times since its launch and traffic seems to align with fishery trends (e.g., Red Snapper season opening). The top five pages in order of pageviews are Regulations, Homepage, Red Snapper, Dolphin, and Best Fishing Practices (BFP). 27% of visitors to the Red Snapper Regulations page then went on to visit the BFP page. The Fish Rules regulations function is frequently used, and visitors spend the most time per visit on the BFP page.

The AP was asked a series of discussion questions to help guide website and social media approaches, including which website and social media statistics are most useful, strategies to promote page engagement on the website, and general website recommendations (design, accessibility, features, etc.).

**AP Feedback:**

- General agreement that the new website is visually pleasing, easy to navigate, and reflects the large amount of work and effort that went into earlier development of the site
- Analytics are helpful because they help illustrate the user journey through the website
- For analytics, especially time spent on pages, consider the staff use of website and exclude if possible

- Consider options for using Google Ads, geofencing (location-based marketing) if budgets allow to better target audience
  - Document analytics over time to assess whether website changes have the intended impact
  - Examine differences in engagement between the old website and the new
- Canva Pro account is available for free to foundations (non-profit) and for accessing quality images
- The Fish Rules app may have features that allow for additional analytics
  - Gulf considering using analytics based on location to look at analytics on effort, etc.
  - Nick is working with Fish Rules and has access to analytics
- Continue practice of linking pages with relevant content, e.g., Red Snapper regulations page to BFP
  - Take deeper dive into user journey and understand how to drive traffic to most relevant pages
- Continue to integrate Fish Rules on additional pages on the website
- For social media:
  - Consider sharing posts promoting BFP, etc. (with guidance and caution)
  - Fish Brain has a separate social media platform from Fish Rules and Gulf Council is using analytics
  - Consider engagement and multiple images on social media posts – Gallery and Carousel
  - Use more videos for increased engagement
  - Keep postings brief

## 2. Best Fishing Practices

Three presentations were provided to the AP relative to Best Fishing Practices (BFP):

- a. *The Nature Conservancy - David Moss, Florida Fisheries Project Manager*  
TNC is acting as a go between management agencies and fishermen to properly communicate information. Responsive Management Survey of anglers conducted in 2021 in FL and SC to determine use and awareness of descending devices and where fishermen obtain information. Noted case studies where angler behavior has changed, e.g., release of Largemouth Bass, Sailfish and the effectiveness of media and peer pressure. TNC campaign is now using media influencers and ambassadors to get message out for BFP including partnerships with Tom Roland Podcast, the Fish Guyz, and other social media influencers. A follow up survey is tentatively planned.
- b. *Fostering Collaboration Across the Southeast U.S. – Melissa Crouch, FWC*  
Descending Device Outreach Coordination Team created in 2022 as an internal group to foster collaboration to coordinate messaging and streamline efforts across the Southeast U.S. – focus on descending device awareness and use. Team meets every other month and includes FWC, SAFMC, Gulf Council, TNC, Sea Grant, other state agencies. Involved in ICAST 2022, compiling outreach strategies, research, public outreach events, online and print resources, marketing initiatives.

- c. *Best Fishing Practices Update – Ashley Oliver, Sea Grant Reef Fish Extension Fellowship* designed to increase awareness, knowledge and use of fishing methods that will improve survivorship of released fish. Outreach strategies include tack shop tours, fishing seminars, charter trips, and industry events. Noted regional differences in knowledge and understanding of BFP and use of descending devices.

The AP was asked to provide input and recommendations for BFP outreach and communication specific to the Sea Grant Reef Fish Extension program and provided the following:

**AP Feedback:**

- There is a lot of overlap with BFP outreach efforts – a good thing
- Partnering with NGOs, charter captains, etc. is beneficial to help address distrust of government agencies
- Internal communication and partnerships such as the Descending Device Outreach Coordination Team are effective means of sharing information and streamlining efforts
- Need better data to demonstrate the effectiveness of using descending devices, concrete numbers and more research to show the success rate:
  - Spud Woodward noted the challenge is the *ability to measure the use of descending devices* and the need to have positive reinforcement, e.g., turning dead discards into harvestable fish.
  - Support for adding questions about use of descending devices to surveys whenever possible
- Use of media influencers can be beneficial but there are concerns
  - Broad spectrum of influencers – organic, paid, etc.
  - Manage expectations when working with influencers and any associated financial costs
  - Be careful who you partner with when choosing to work with influencers
  - There is a small pool of “good guy” influencers that are willing to share messaging without being compensated
- Continue outreach efforts to bait and tackle shops, partnering with states and expanding tackle shop data base
  - Important to maintain personal relationships
  - Add questions during tackle shop visits to gauge demographics
  - Need to be strategic in choosing tackle shops and revisiting
    - Consider using barcode information from manufacturers and distributors to see where the majority of descending devices are being distributed and to identify areas where lack of distribution may be an issue
  - Incorporate actual descending devices into visits to tackle shops if possible
  - FWC available to help with outreach at tackle shops and with charter captains
    - “If you can’t touch it, feel it and try it, it will always be hard for people to buy into it.”

- Reach out to Outdoor Writer’s Association to access writers willing to help
- Reach out to the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) for support
  - Note that ASA was a partner in earlier Fish Smart effort promoting descending devices
- Need positive reinforcement for use of descending devices
- Fishermen can make their own devices and need information on materials needed to do so
- Coordinate and share information with port agents
- Options for push notifications on Fish Rules to promote BFP
- Use a vehicle “wrap” – get a donated vehicle with information wrap publicizing BFP and website while visiting tackle shops and other outreach efforts.
- Create push notification texts to anglers to incentivize them to visit stores that carry descending devices

### 3. SAFMC Release and Citizen Science Program Update

Council staff provided an update on the Council’s Citizen Science Program and projects, with a focus on SAFMC Release. The AP was asked to provide input and recommendations for SAFMC Release outreach, recruitment, and retention strategies and provided the following:

#### AP Feedback:

- Recruitment
  - Define the “journey” – how to be a good angler. Think of marketing the BFP and SAFMC Release as a package. Make it personal.
    - Provide a link to SAFMC Release on the BFP webpage
  - Consider additional mailing promotions with partners, state agencies, etc., similar to the successful mailing with NCDMF
  - Consider partnering activity with FWC State Reef Fish Survey
  - Use creel survey personnel to raise awareness and help with recruitment
- Retention
  - Develop a participant recognition program to highlight those who are submitting release data
  - Consider giveaways as a way to “sweeten the pot” for participants. (Note that use of tangible incentives is limited by the Council and may require partners to facilitate)
  - Consider “rolling responsibility” for SAFMC Release participants to lower long-term time commitment for users
    - Additional participants will help avoid “selection fatigue”
  - Consider asking participants for a commitment when they sign up and/or annually (e.g., ask users how many release submissions they think they could make in a year with friendly check ins by staff)

- Incorporate a direct method through which participants in the SciFish app can easily ask questions (e.g., an “email us” button)
- Add a notes section in the app
- Consider linking outreach to good weather windows when conditions are favorable for boats to head offshore; would likely need to be done by state or sub-regional level
- Consider developing a quicker way to log multiple releases within the app; need to balance ease of data entry with level of data needed for usage
- Use auto-generated reminders and/or push notifications to app users, similar to those used for doctor appointments, etc. for reporting
  - A possible question to ask via text: “Did you go fishing this week?” and ask for a yes or no response.

#### **4. Outreach and Communication Strategies**

##### **- Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35 and BFP Outreach**

##### **- Equity and Environmental Justice National Strategy**

As a follow up to earlier discussions on outreach and communication tools, the AP was asked to provide input on the pros and cons associated with websites, social media use, personal contacts, partnerships, and participation in trade shows and conventions.

##### **AP Feedback – Outreach and Communication Strategies:**

- Website:
  - Reaches larger audience, good introduction to general information, analytics helpful, use social media to direct traffic to website
- In-person Outreach
  - High reward, “gold standard” for communication, informal conversations are critical, make a priority for scheduling, identify and prioritize target audience and messaging
  - Define what you are trying to learn or accomplish through the event and define metrics to measure specifics
  - In-person is staff-time intensive, use in combination with other outreach strategies. Utilize informal local outreach after hours.
- Partnerships
  - Good solution for strategic planning and targeting audiences, should be ongoing, an evolving process, select partners carefully
  - May be mixed objectives, consider all points of view, some partners may want “ownership”, sector conflicts may arise
- Shows/Conferences
  - Define audience and take aways, Sea Grant study indicates public support for receiving information at trade shows, FWC research indicates audience may already have basic awareness, good for maintaining audience; helpful for reaching commercial sector if targeted, allows for long-term planning a promotion with media involvement

- May reach the same audience at annual events, involve media to highlight participation
- **Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35 and BFP Outreach**  
The AP was provided a brief overview of Red Snapper management and challenges affecting outreach and communication. An update was provided on Regulatory Amendment 35 direction from the Council to add an appendix to promote BFP and develop a program to expand BFP education and outreach for the snapper grouper fishery.

**AP Feedback:**

- Need clear goal to share with fishermen and quantify benefits to fishermen
- Coordinate with NMFS Permits Office – all fishermen applying/reapplying for permits provided information on reporting requirements, regulations, and BFP via the website
- FWC programs noted for recreational anglers that are voluntary
- Need to fund a “Sister Program” to Return ‘Em Right in the Gulf
  - Experts to address communication needs and program development
  - Focused campaign
  - Independently branded organization is key based on experience with the Gulf Council and partners
- Staff asked for key items from Return ‘Em Right has been most valuable?
  - Branding separate from Council
  - Communications Manager (Nick Haddad)
  - Marketing firm (logo, branding, messaging)
  - Involving fishermen in program development
  - Define benefits
  - Having descending devices rigged for use and distributed
  - Online educational module and survey follow up to gauge use
- Continue to emphasize the need for data on use of the descending devices
  - Spud noted Recreational Permitting and Reporting Requirement Technical AP and Council’s intent to look at options
  - AP generally supports efforts to define targeted audience
- Create a “Master Gardener” or “Train the Trainer” type of program for fishermen
  - Use the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) as a resource for recruiting participants
- Communicate science via a story or narrative
  - “Houston, We Have a Narrative” – book referenced for this approach
  - Uses a set formula to engage people
  - Noted Andy Strelcheck’s presentation at the September 2022 meeting, earlier Red Snapper presentation by John Carmichael used for outreach, and Red Snapper management history presentation at AP meeting as starting points for narrative.

- Consider options to secure Congressional funding for long-term commitments (noting restrictions on lobbying)

Spud Woodward noted the need to address evaluation of any programs that are implemented. This may be a topic for the next AP meeting.

*Note:* Due to time constraints, Chairman Baker requested the AP provide additional recommendations for a BFP Program and Equity and Environmental Justice via email following the OC AP meeting. A copy of the summary of responses is included as *Appendix A*.

**AP Members in Attendance (via webinar\*)**

Scott Baker, Jr., Chair

Shelly Krueger, Vice Chair\*

Melissa Crouch

Steve Dougherty\*

Bryan Fluech

BeBe Dalton Harrison

Tyler Jones\*

Katie Latanich

LT Andrew Loeffler

Diana Martino

Sean Meehan\*

Emily Muehlstein\*

George Patane

Mark Phelps

Cinthia Sandoval\*

Patricia Smith

Robert Todd

Erin Weeks

## EEJ Questions for OC AP

1. How can staff facilitate the representation of all fishery stakeholders (fishermen, crew, distributors) on advisory panels?
2. How can staff help Council members build relationships with advisory panel members and the public that allows for two-way communication and trust? Open houses?
3. How can staff facilitate involvement of underserved communities when requesting public comment/input?
4. Does staff reach fishing communities through sufficiently varied communication platforms, languages, and outreach activities? Are you aware of preferred methods of communication within these communities?

## Red Snapper outreach questions for OC AP

1. What tools could outreach staff use to communicate this problem in an engaging and effective way?
2. Given additional resources, what NEW facets of outreach and communication could the Council utilize to spread information on best fishing practices?
3. Are there additional industry groups staff could engage with to spread information on best fishing practices?

## Comments re: EEJ from OC AP received after the meeting held October 4-5, 2022.

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Following up on EEJ, I wanted to point you toward some interesting thoughts (<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6976398804518412288/>) from the Pacific Council's new ED, Merrick Burden around accessibility and unwritten norms in the Council process. He posted this to Linked In and there are some interesting comments in the thread. Guess I'm taking the easy way out on our homework assignment by sharing someone else's comments but I thought this was really thought provoking and would be a useful prompt for a future O&C AP conversation. It's hard to see the barriers to participating in a process we're all familiar and comfortable with, and I think this group would have some good insight. New AP members might as well.

– Katie Latanich

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For the EEJ Questions, Q1-4, consider adding a part-time position, student or contractor to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility – known as DEIJA – across SAFMC efforts. This person could analyze existing public comment and interactions, compare public comment to stakeholder demographics and perform a gap analysis to see what communities and groups may not be participating in the process and why.

- Scott Baker

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1. I know it's hard getting an equal number of individuals from various aspects of any of our fisheries, but equity is a goal.
  2. Open Houses would be a good idea, but they would need to be no more than 50 miles from each other. I wouldn't expect a person from Brunswick to go to Savannah for an open house.
  3. I'm big on face-to-face. A lot of fishermen and citizens still feel that if their opinion is wanted you'll go to them instead of posting a link on a website or media page. However, going around to the docks and marinas requires a lot of time, but by posting posters of information and such with incentives for attendance/input you do not have to stay at that marina/dock as long so you keep moving as the poster hanging would show effort that you went out into the industry to get their opinion and that they are not just another email on a server.
  4. As a teacher, sufficient communication never happens in real life because no matter what all you do, you could always have done more (or at least the public thinks that). In today's day and age, we need the electrical elements of communication, but you also need the old school formats for older fishermen. Some of our newer/younger fishermen want to be seen and asked personally face-to-face as well but there are times we need the faster and more widespread element of communication as well. So we must not chose one platform over another - we need to use all.

– Robert Todd

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Q1 Attendance of stakeholders. What is their perceived knowledge of the gov't entity? How much prejudice is there from their peers about SAFMC? Did the peers lose income or earned income by the decisions the council made? Is the awareness of our fishery reality connected to theirs? Now to get in the door and be heard , give them the verbal space, timed, and thanked.

Q2 Relationship building. The AP's presence in Florida has been weak, not enough meet and greets to generate trust through a fistbump at minimum. Most of my interactions lead to the “Whats-In-It-For-Me” if I follow the new regs, who are on the water -enforcement (Budgets}. Perhaps as was touched upon- train the trainer- facts are facts , but the buy in is for the most part personable.

Q3 Underserved fishing community. These are the employees that follow their employers lead-good or illegal. Meetings, interactions should be timed as best as possible to bring awareness 30-45 days out, account for attendance interferences- family, sports, "i forgot". . With all the permit data available, that iphone can send reminders.

Q4 Communication platforms. Rock concerts work. Seriously, print is almost dead, electronic is the future, again mine the data banks. There should be demographics reflecting where the fisher people are.

-George Pantane

## Comments re: red snapper outreach from OC AP received after the meeting held October 4-5, 2022.

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Re: Red snapper communications and outreach challenges – I think we touched on this meeting but wanted to +1 the value of John Carmichael’s talk on the red snapper stock assessment and Kim’s talk on the history of red snapper actions and outreach for situating current challenges in a longer context & trajectory. I am not sure how best to apply that approach using other outreach tools (and given limited attention spans) but appreciate how these talks help tell a story to frame current challenges in terms of where management has been in the past and could go in the future. Maybe consider adapting these talks for a public audience?

Also, Emily does a lot of public hearing videos for Gulf Council actions. It would be interesting to hear her thoughts on 1) whether/how they’ve adapted those videos over time in response to public feedback or Council guidance, and 2) what metrics they find meaningful (plays, links, completed views, etc).

- Katie Latanich

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Several things could be attempted to highlight the red snapper challenges and need for buy-in, public support:

Unfortunately, we need to convince people that we don’t know (no permit frame) about a topic that they probably do not fully understand (reef fish and barotrauma) and convince them to foster behavior change (use descending devices with as much passion as catching fish) that they believe may not be necessary, because as individuals, their actions may not matter.

Continue work on feasibility of identifying all participants that interact with reef fish, including red snapper. Without a universe of participants, measurable outcomes from outreach efforts will only be estimated and relative rather than absolute. Outside of FL that has a reef fish permit, consider developing a voluntary, opt-in “registry” of participants (to include, in addition to, known participants). These people could be queried via email or text a couple of times a year to determine activity (and compare to known participation). In lieu of opt-in registries, continue to seek to add “descending device” question to MRIP dockside surveys. With the onslaught of social media and other technologies present in folks’ lives, we need structure to repeatedly interact directly with fishers to foster behavior change.

Perhaps break down the John Carmichael video and Kim Iverson red snapper management history ppt and polish them (add video, imagery and people talking) into short video chapters for social media. These can be fed out in part to not tax folks limited attention spans. They could also be hosted on the SAFMC YT channel. The video would likely be more effective if it told a story and utilized key stakeholders (Council and/or SG AP members) to tell (narrate) the story. Here is an example video by NCWRC with stakeholders themselves explaining the Sportfish Restoration Program.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RebWs5Ns1uQ>.

In lieu of not promoting a story told by SAFMC, pitch the SA red snapper problem and solutions to a major news organization like 60 Minutes, NBC, NPR, etc. in the hopes that they will produce a story and garner attention. There are excellent resources available on how to do this.

Train the trainer program that emulates / replicates the master gardener program run through cooperative extension programs. The goal would be to identify, train and dispatch individuals into local communities to educate fishers about BFP. Such a program could expand the physical footprint of people knowledgeable of issues. Potential participants would be contacts of SAFMC APs, CIT Sci, state and federal port samplers, and MREP graduates. They could also be long-term employees of tackle shops and marinas – places that interact with anglers daily.

Develop and launch a cit-sci blitz (short period of intense sign up and reporting) to capitalize on excitement and minimize fatigue. For example, the goal is to engage new participants by making them active immediately and then following up with participants to encourage participation in more rigorous cit-sci programs like SAFMC Release. One idea would be to copy the NOAA Fish Picture Contest – but instead solicit photos of the most unusual fish captured and offering to share all photos with participants. This could be “gamified” by creating a quiz for folks to test their fish identification knowledge.

Seek funding from government or NGOs to replicate the Return EM Right / BFP / FLSG reef fish training for individual anglers for the SA with device giveaways.

Last, fully consider what the technological future of reef fish fishing will and could look like in the foreseeable future – and from a thought perspective - work backwards from this futuristic situation to the tools and resources available today. This is the type of approach used in “logic models” where you identify the long-term outcomes to be achieved and work your backwards (from outcomes, to reports, to methods, to inputs). Ideally, this could be a situation where data collection and reporting are done autonomously, automatically, and correctly with no to minimal input by the user. To a great extent, many of the technologies to allow this are available, but not refined or perhaps legal to use for fisheries management challenges. The sooner we as managers can make these desires known, there may be opportunities to combine management needs with public sector (fisheries) manufacturer research, development and interest. For example, are there technological applications that can automate/facilitate our behavior to handle/descend reef fish if and when required?

- Scott Baker

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Re: red snapper, the BFP training education is a must. It seems we have a decent plan to address this. With 60% of dead discards on red snapper in Jacksonville area. We need to spend most of our efforts there.

I also want to see further work on the permits office side. Making the for hire and commercial users watch videos, take test like the shark endorsement program. This will guarantee that all but recreational people have basic knowledge of BFP.

With respect to red snapper and the bottom fishing complex as a whole. I understand the job of our AP and the council is not to create policies or have the ability to change Magnuson-Stevens act. However, I feel the bigger problem is with magnum Steven's act modifications in 2010. The rigid ACL laws have dramatically affected the way council can manage the fisheries. We work very hard to create seasons, gear restrictions etc. Since 2010 we have had 3 major failures in fisheries management since this change. The black seabass, cobia and now red snapper. The rigid laws don't allow for a "recovering "

fishery. It doesn't allow council to use their experience, science, or common sense at all when making decisions. They are forced to use a "flawed" formula regardless of the results. The formula used has no "flexibility" in what can measure fisheries management can make to create common sense laws.

I am in contact with many experienced fishermen, captains, tackle store owners daily. The vast majority do not understand Magnuson-Stevens act. They only know that it exists. We need to educate these shareholders. We must find a way to educate captains, recreational fishermen, tackle store owners on Magnuson-Stevens issues and push for change! Council cannot make changes but we are the most informed on the issues. Most people have no idea it needs modifying. I understand it's very difficult to change and has only been done 3 times in 45 years. However, the rules put into place in 2010 were too "rigid" don't allow enough flexibility in the formula to make good sound fisheries decisions. I myself do not have the knowledge of how to start the process of informing congressmen, senators, etc. on how we make changes. We should be educating public on forcing the council to write up revisions for Magnuson-Stevens act so senators have something to take to the top.

Without changes to Magnuson-Stevens act of 2010. We will continue to work extremely hard on "details" of how to handle recovering fisheries. Instead of being allowed to let Council to use their knowledge, science, experience to make fisheries rules.

I know this is somewhat off topic from what you asked. However, from what I have learned about the "formula" currently in place. Even if we educate with 100% compliance of BFP. We still will not have a red snapper season in 10 or 15 years. Considering the rebound of the fisheries. This doesn't follow common sense or science! We just had the best recruitment class of gag grouper recorded in 25 yrs inshore this year. More closure and gear restrictions are not the long-term answer here.

- Capt. Mark Phelps

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## Red Snapper

So the idea of wrapping a vehicle wasn't bad. From my experience with fishermen, they'll tell a lady in a news van more than the government in an unmarked or marked vehicle.

I think one element that needs to be denoted is we do not make the laws, we just communicate them. I would say open house events within 50 miles of each other. Communicate via mailing, emailing, social media, and posters at docks/marinas. Create some incentive for coming to them whether it is free food, drawings for prizes (\$20 gift card to Bass Pro Shops, or maybe descending device or other fishing gear - anything tangible).

With teaching, I get more student input and involvement when there is some sort of prize used as an attendance incentive. If we want online feedback, same thing (Your email has been put in a drawing for whatever prize). See what can be bought from the budget, but also see what can be donated to help serve our cause.

- Robert Todd

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First , SE Florida, not a great Red (snapper) fishery, they are not here. So, off north Florida for the proper season and off season to see the discard problem.

Way too many inlets to monitor, increase residents= increase infrastructure to conserve.

An educational video with quiz , generates a pass i.d. that stays on your phone for a year. Everglades National Park has one, goliath grouper is a lottery, sharks have one. Boater safety course, add on for fishing.

Second thought is utilize the scuba divers ability to see below, video trips, citizen science.

Third, Use the zip codes from distributors of tackle to share(Maybe), where the tools for release are sold heavily versus light sales. Either case, boots on the ground have a destination.

Reach out to the governors of each state to announce the season, but also the release behaviour is just as important for tomorrow

Drones over high Red snapper fisheries, definitely get results on discards.

\*\*\*Just a note from the dolphin mtg at the fishing club. Poorly attended, not enough lead time for members, the keys went better, more dolphin fishery closer to land. Will stay in touch with Ashley, will provide quarterly calendars, to assist with planning.

- George Patane