

Frequently Asked Questions



-About SAFMC Release-



What is Citizen Science?

Citizen science is a growing field involving the public in scientific research. Trained members of the public collaborate and engage with scientists to collect information and data. Public participation advances science, research, and policy and fosters an informed and engaged citizenship.

What is SAFMC Release?

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (SAFMC) Citizen Science Program works with fishermen and scientists to develop projects to address the Council's research needs. One of those projects is SAFMC Release – a citizen science project that works with recreational, for-hire, and commercial fishermen to collect data about their released fish. We currently collect information on 10 grouper species and Red Snapper (for a detailed list, see below). Participants use the free and easy-to-use mobile app, SciFish, to collect this information. The data provided by fishermen like you supports the informed, long-term management of the snapper grouper fishery.

Why should I get involved?



This is your opportunity to share what you're seeing on the water! The number of released fish is increasing in South Atlantic fisheries. For effective management, it's crucial that we gain a better understanding of the fish being released. However, we can't collect data on these fish through traditional sampling methods, which usually occur back at docks. We need help from fishermen, like you, to gather this vital information.

Additionally, by contributing to the project, you gain access to our monthly newsletters and annual data reports. Our newsletters feature information about the project, other citizen science opportunities, and best fishing practices. Our annual data reports provide a summary of the data submitted and offer insights into the snapper grouper fishery, such as the percentage of fishers who are using descending devices or the depth at which certain species are caught most frequently (no individual data are shared). This information is not only interesting but could support your fishing expertise.

How do I set up a SciFish account?

Complete this online [form](#) and we will create your SciFish account. We will contact you with your login credentials, training materials, and additional information about the project. If you prefer, you can email Julia Byrd (julia.byrd@safmc.net) or Meg Withers (meg.withers@safmc.net) with your name, date of birth, city and state, fishing sector, and how you heard about the project.



SciFish

What species are included?

Red Snapper and 10 grouper species, which include Black, Gag, Red, Scamp, Yellowfin, and Yellowmouth Groupers; Red Hind; Rock Hind; Coney and Graysby. It can sometimes be tricky to identify shallow water grouper. Check out our [shallow water grouper ID guide](#) for pointers.

How do I log a release?

You can log a release using the free mobile app, SciFish. We have created demonstration videos that walk you through how to use the app. You can find those [here](#).

Can I use SciFish when I don't have cell service?

Yes! Log into the app before heading offshore and you will be able to save data in the app. Just remember to upload the data once you regain cell service.

Do I have to log every released fish on a trip?

We understand that there are times when you catch and release a lot of fish and logging information about all of them would be difficult. Instead of trying to log every fish or picking which fish to include, we suggest taking a random sample of your catch. Think about the average number of fish you release on a trip and divide that number by 10 to estimate how many fish to measure. For example, if you typically release 30 fish on a given trip, you could log every third fish. This helps to ensure that we get a representative size distribution from your trip.



What if I don't release a fish?

Information about kept fish is still valuable. You can log a “no-release” trip in the SciFish app by selecting the fourth icon (the circle with a line through it) and entering the trip type, the date, and relevant notes.

How are the data used?

Each piece of information entered in the SciFish app is useful and valuable.

- Data on length provide insight into the age of released fish. It's very difficult to collect age data from released fish, so we collect length measurements because it's the next best thing.
- Sharing the depth of capture, release condition, and use of descending devices or venting tools are important factors in determining the likelihood that a released fish survived.
- Date and location (optional) information help us to understand where and when releases occur.



All these data will be considered for use in upcoming stock assessments and relevant management actions. This information is not used to estimate the total number of released fish, nor does it inform us about catch levels or catch rates. Instead, data collected through SAFMC Release will help us better characterize the size of released fish and how many released fish survive. This information is meant to supplement what we already know about managed species.

Are my data confidential?

All the information you submit as part of SAFMC Release is confidential. The data is safely stored in the ACCSP Data Warehouse and shared only with science and management agencies to inform management decisions. When described in public contexts, trip and fishing location information are combined with that of other users and presented generally to avoid displaying any individualized information.



Still have questions? Contact us!

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