

Agency Education and Outreach Efforts on the use of Best Fishing Practices
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
December 2019

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NC DMF)

- Recreational fishing brochures available on the NC DMF website:
 - [Ethical Angling: A Guide to Responsible Fishing](#)
 - [Best Practices for the Ethical Angler](#)
- Continued partnering with North Carolina universities and Sea Grant to further research on release mortality of snapper grouper species in relation to different recompression techniques.

North Carolina Sea Grant

- Worked with Sea Grant staff in North Carolina, Virginia, and New Jersey, and for-hire captains to design and test multi-fish descending devices in the Mid-Atlantic. [Final report available.](#)
- Brochures, [blog posts](#) and articles in Coastwatch providing information on barotrauma, descending devices and other best fishing practices.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

- [Blog posts](#) and [videos](#) providing information on barotrauma and descending devices.
- In-person interactions at public outreach events and during dockside surveys.

South Carolina Wildlife Federation

- Developed a [tutorial](#) for offshore anglers to learn about barotrauma and how to reduce release mortality by using descending devices. The first 350 anglers to complete the tutorial were gifted a SeaQualizer.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

- [Blog posts](#) and [videos](#) providing information on barotrauma and descending devices.
- Held two free public workshops where experts presented on the use of descending devices. Participants were eligible to win free SeaQualizers.
- In-person interactions at public outreach events and during dockside surveys.

Georgia Sea Grant

- Working with The Nature Conservancy on forums to discuss outreach strategies for Gray's Reef. Discussion topics including best fishing practices and attendings received a free descending device.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

- In-person interactions (ongoing):
 - FWC marine fisheries outreach and education staff promote proper fish handling, best fishing practices (including circle hooks and dehooking tools) and barotrauma mitigation devices (focusing on introducing descending devices and

ensuring that if anglers are using venting tools, they are using them correctly) by bringing gear for demonstrations at:

- Public outreach events (festivals, boat shows, fishing expos, etc.)
- Adult, women's and kids' fishing clinics and camps
- Presentations to fishing clubs and organizations
- Other events as they pop up
- FWC provides circle hooks to anglers at many of the above events, plus the chance for anglers to practice using dehooking tools, lip grips, descending devices and venting tools.
- Catch a Florida Memory saltwater angler recognition programs promote best fishing practices (ongoing, began in 2016)
 - Program encourages anglers to target a diversity of species, reducing fishing pressure on the most commonly sought-after catches.
 - Provides suggestions for best fishing practices and fish handling through communications to anglers and conservation-oriented prizes (such as dehooking tools and lip grips).
- [Catch & Release brochure](#) (ongoing):
 - Collaborated with FL Sea Grant to develop content.
 - Disseminated at public education and outreach events, to participants of various programs, and through mailouts to interested organizations.
- [Other publications/communications](#) (ongoing):
 - Many other FWC publications include messaging on best fishing practices and fish handling.
 - Fishing Lines field guide, saltwater fishing regulations publication, Boating and Angling guide maps, monthly Fishing in the Know newsletter, press releases from time to time, and other items.
- [Fish Handling webpage](#) (ongoing):
 - Includes a wide variety of information on best fishing practices and descending devices.
- [Videos on YouTube](#) (ongoing, began in 2016):
 - FWC Saltwater Fishing YouTube Channel provides fishing how-to videos and other informational videos.
 - Descending Devices playlist includes how-to videos on all currently available descending devices FWC could acquire, as well as videos on barotrauma and how to use venting tools.
 - Videos are disseminated through press releases, on social media, and were used to inform anglers who participated in the 2017 FWC Citizen Science Descending Device Study.
- [2017 FWC Citizen Science Descending Device Study](#):
 - Provided various types of descending devices to over 600 anglers and captains to learn more about possible barriers to descending device use in Florida (Gulf and Atlantic).
 - 145 SeaQualizers, 146 RokLees, 147 Shelton Fish Descenders, 134 Fish Savers, 38 Safe Release Weights, 24 inverted milk crates (total of 634 devices provided).

Florida Sea Grant

- [2019 Florida Friendly Fishing Guide Certification program](#) with FL Sea Grant (launched recently and will be ongoing):
 - Although FL Sea Grant is the lead on this new effort, FWC assisted in development of fisheries conservation and best fishing practices information in educational modules and provided 50 dehooking tools for captains who participate in the program.
 - FWC is assisting in the recruitment of captains to this program and will possibly conduct a post-card mail-out to captains.
- Agents have taken a series of offshore trips with anglers to introduce them to descending gear. They completed a year-long project taking outdoor writers fishing and encouraging them to write articles on descending devices.
- Sea Grant has conducted an angler survey to gather an understanding of knowledge of barotrauma and the use of mitigating devices.
- They own the website domain www.CatchandRelease.org and update the page with new material as the material become available. The website includes information on:
 - Catch and release practices
 - Handling
 - Hooking and dehooking
 - Descending and venting devices.

FishSmart Red Snapper and Red Drum Conservation Project

- Supplies free descending devices to offshore fishermen. The project also encourages anglers to use best fishing practices to reduce mortality rates and enhancing the fishing experience.
 - Includes a survey asking anglers to estimate the number of fish they release, their techniques, and experiences.
 - NC DMF, SC DNR, GA DNR, and FWC are participants.