



**RETURN 'EM
RIGHT**

Return 'Em Right

Gulf States Marine
Fisheries Commission
Commission Business
Meeting

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Goals

- Reduce post-release mortality
- Increase the health of fisheries
- Improve angler experiences

Objectives

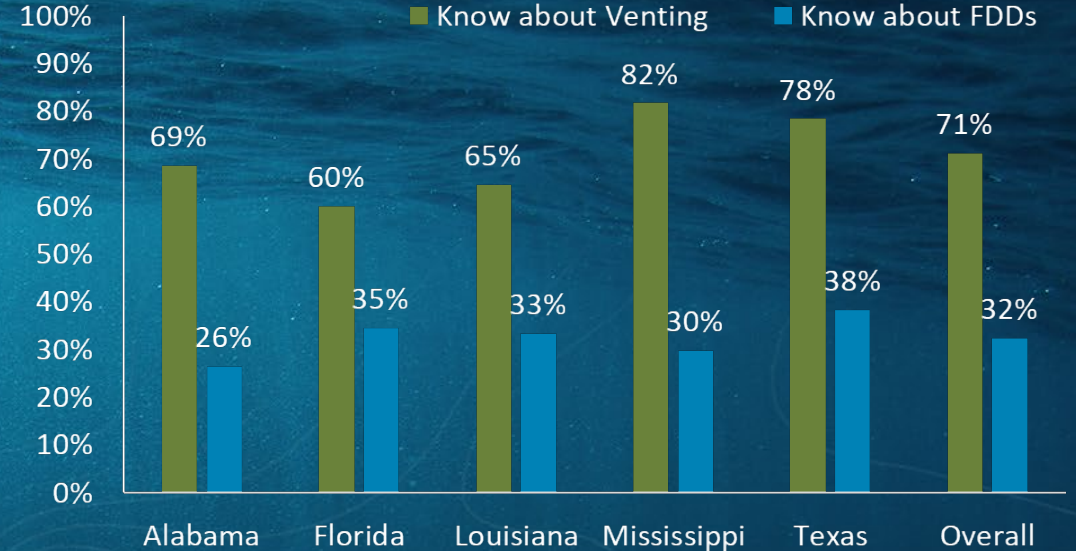
- Provide tools and training
- Measure prevalence of use and trends
- Validate mortality rates and effectiveness of release treatments





Human Dimensions Survey

- Goal: establish a baseline of information
- Over 4,200 responses from rec reef fish anglers Gulf-wide
- Some preliminary results
 - Anglers are more aware of venting methods than descending devices
 - 60% only reef fish a few times a season
 - Most anglers fished in >60 ft of water
 - Differences by state, so outreach can be tailored regionally
- 2024 follow-up survey will measure changes that may result from RER





Research

Principal

Investigator	Institution	Location	Research Priorities
Dr. Stephen Szedlmayer	Auburn University	MS/AL coast	Compare release mortality & survival of descended sed snapper across depth zones
Dr. Marcus Drymon	Mississippi State University	Gulf-wide	Evaluate depredation rates of released reef fish; depredator ID
Erik Lang	LA Department of Wildlife & Fisheries	LA coast	Compare efficiency of release; characterize depredation; survey anglers' device type preferences
Dr. Will Patterson	University of Florida	West FL Shelf	Estimate seasonal release mortality of descended gag



Tagged and Surface Released Red Snapper

Dauphin Island, AL

5/27/2021

~100' Depth

Credit: Auburn University



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Monitoring

- At-sea observer programs
 - FL, AL, MS
 - Rates of use for FDDs in for-hire sector
 - Mark-recapture discarded priority reef fishes
- State reef fish validation surveys
 - FDD on board vessel
 - Total # fish released alive using FDD (spp.)
 - Average depth fished during trip
- Federal surveys
 - SRHS – January 2023



Outreach & Education

- Online training course
 - 14-minute training to learn about barotrauma and best release practices
- Over 10,000 reef fish anglers
 - Completed the training and received free descending device package
- Descending device package
 - Standard SeaQualizer (50-100-150 ft)
 - Pre-rigged on three-way swivel
 - 3-lb lead weight
 - SeaYaLater inverted hook



Next Steps

- Continue working with state partners
 - At-sea observers
 - Reef fish validation surveys
- Provide oversight research studies
- Explore opportunities and provide support for outreach and education
- Follow-up human dimensions survey 2024





Questions?