



**RETURN 'EM  
RIGHT**

# Return 'Em Right

Gulf States Marine  
Fisheries Commission  
Fisheries Information  
Network (FIN) meeting

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# Outline

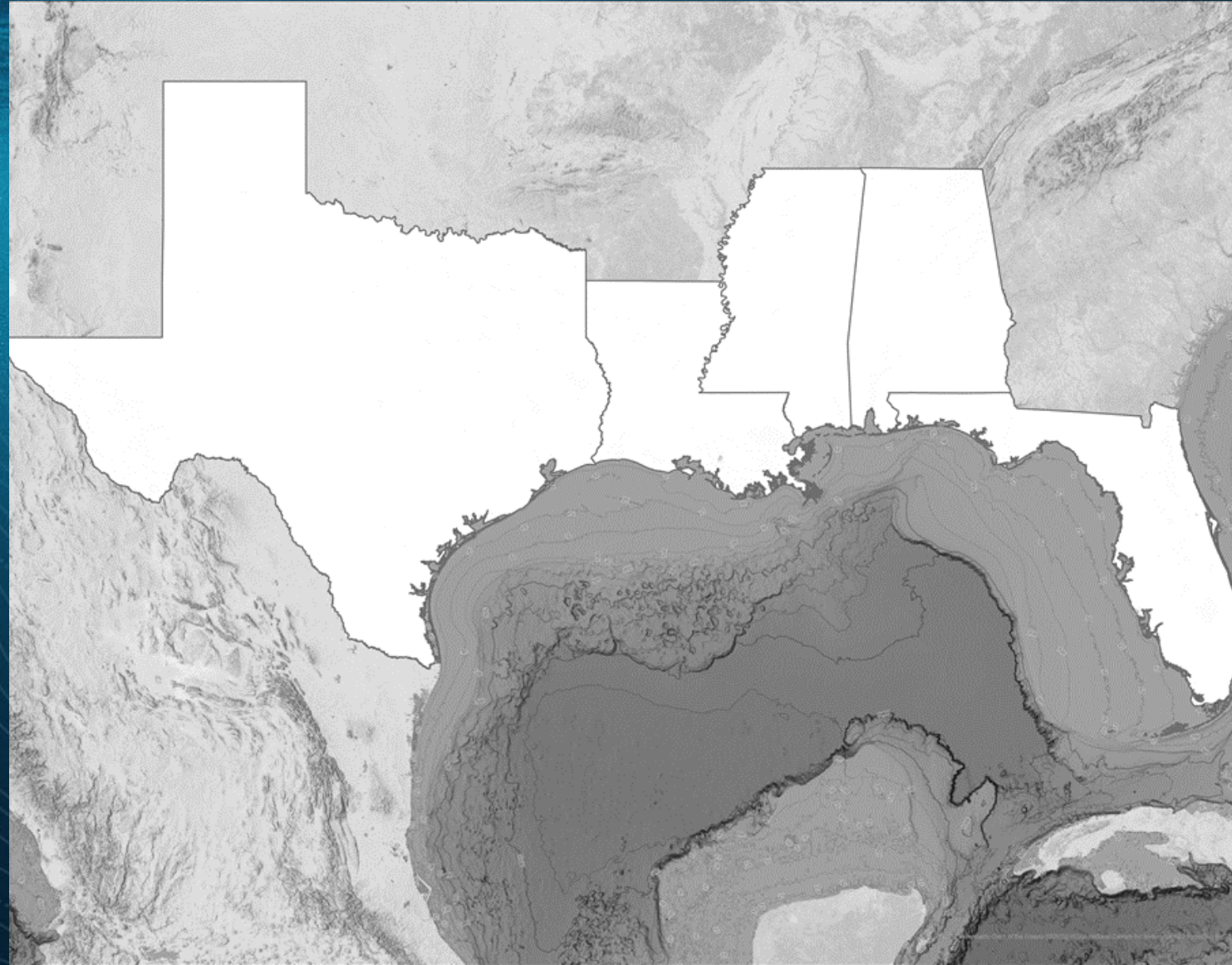
- Overview, goals, & objectives
- Project name
- Research & monitoring
- Outreach & education
- Device distribution
- Education module
- Timeline
- Next Steps





# Project Overview

- 8 years over \$30M
- DWH funding
- Gulf-wide (phased approach)
- NOAA, GSMFC, and FL Sea Grant







# 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







# Project Name

- Return 'Em Right
- Build an independently branded program that resonates with anglers
  - Guided by anglers, grounded by science
  - Promote best release practices







# Collaborative Studies

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





# Collaborative Studies

- Dr. Steve Szedlmayer, AU
- Red Snapper
- MS/AL coast
- Conventional & acoustic tagging
- Compare release survival & mortality
- Outcome: refined estimates of release mortality for RS specific to release treatments

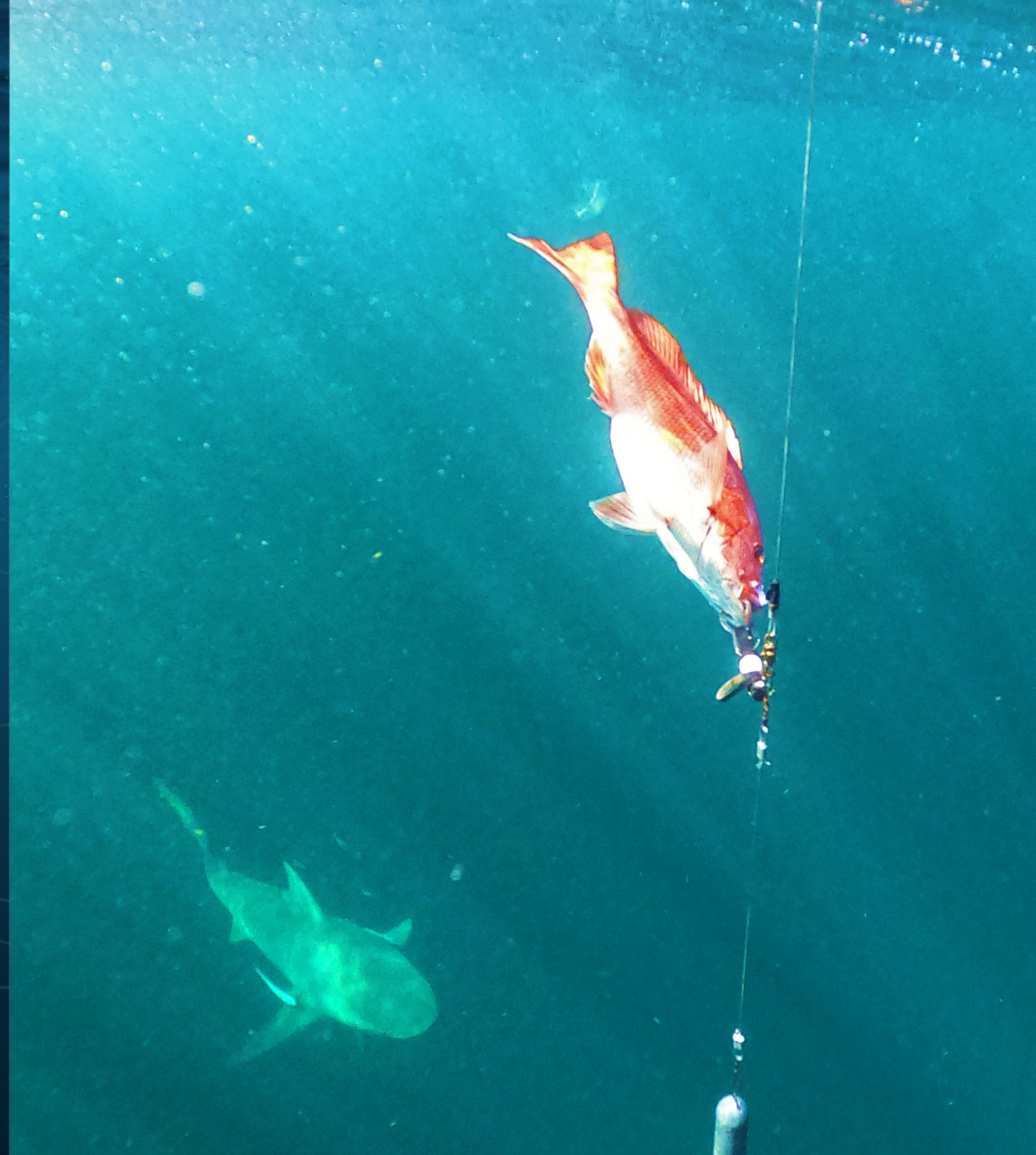






# Collaborative Studies

- Dr. Marcus Drymon, MSU
- Reef fish spp.
- 30 captains Gulf-wide
- Provide training
- Fishery-dependent assessment of predation/depredation
- Outcome: quantify and characterize predator interactions across the U.S. Gulf





# Collaborative Studies

- Erik Lang and Zach Zuckerman, LDWF
- Red Snapper, Greater Amberjack, Gray Triggerfish
- LA coast
- Measure release survival and characterize depredation
- Survey anglers' device type preferences
- Outcome: better understand LA anglers' device preferences and assess depredation in LA







# Collaborative Studies

- Dr. Will Patterson, UF
- Gag
- West FL Shelf
- 3-D acoustic tagging
- Compare release survival & mortality
- Outcome: understand fate of released gag and provide estimates of mortality







# Monitoring

- Rates of use for FDDs in recreational sector
- At-sea observer programs
  - FWC, MDMR, ADCNR
- State reef fish validation surveys
  - FDD on board vessel
  - Total # fish released alive using FDD (spp.)
  - Average depth fished during trip
- Federal surveys (e.g. SRHS, SEFHIER, etc.)





# Outreach & Education

## Goals:

- Promote best release practices focusing on FDDs
- Increase anglers' knowledge and awareness
- Communicate results with public

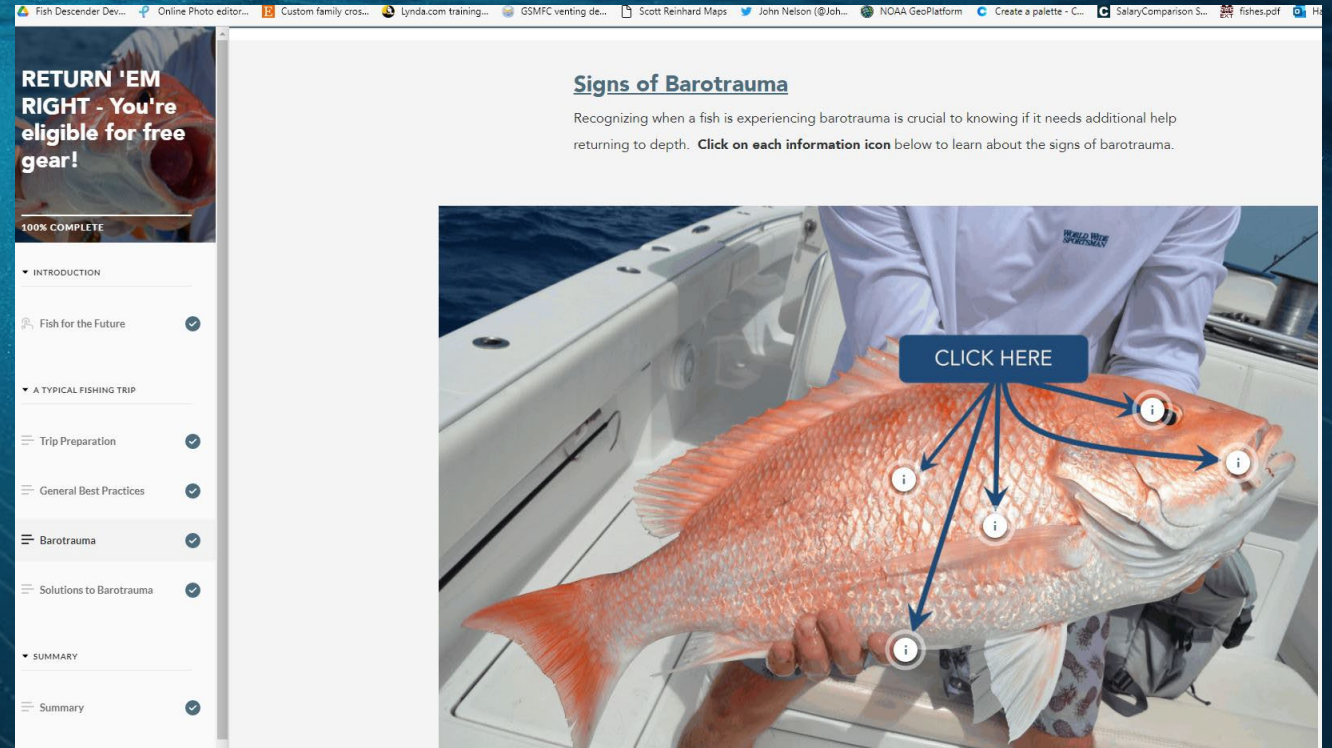






# Education Module

- Best release practices
  - Situational awareness & prep
  - Dehooking, air exposure, appropriate gear, etc.
- Barotrauma mitigation
  - Venting tools
  - Descending devices
- Private rec Apr/May 2022
- Prerequisite to receive gear







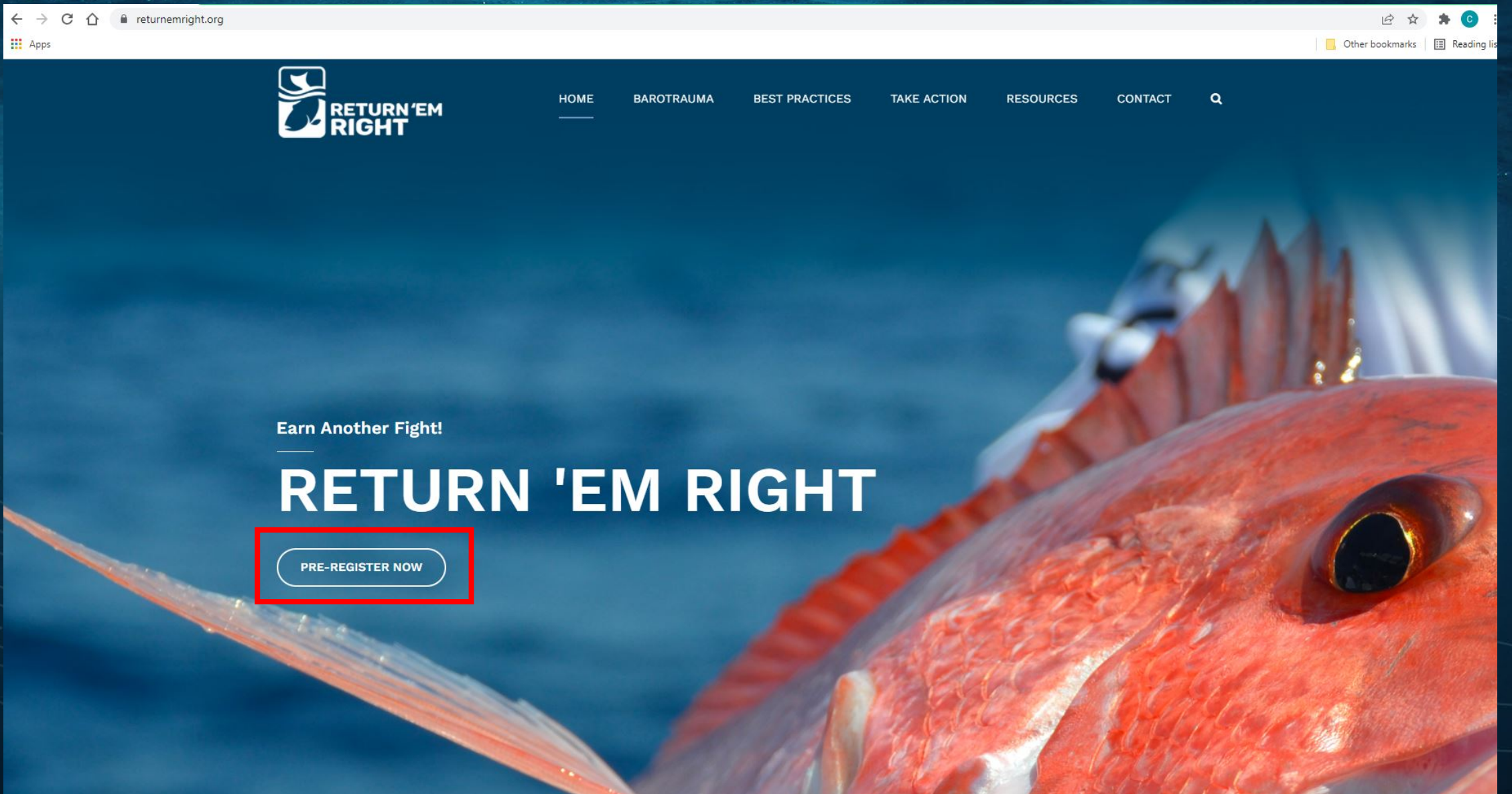
# Device Distribution

- Pre-rigged standard SeaQualizer w/ 3lb weight & SeaYaLater
- Eligibility
  - Complete education module
  - National Saltwater Angler Registry
- Phased approach
  - Phase I – federal for-hire (open)
  - Phase II – private rec (Apr/May 2022)





# Website







# Timeline

## Reduction of Post-release Mortality from Barotrauma in Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Recreational Fisheries

NOAA, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, & FL Sea Grant



Year	2020				2021				2022				2023				2024				2025				2026				2027																	
Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4														
Activity 2						Attitudes & Opinion Surveys (pre-)														Attitudes & Opinion Surveys ( post)																										
Activity 3									Monitor Use & Restoration																																					
Activity 4									Observer Programs Pilot - Headboats								Observer Programs - All For-hire																													
Activity 5						Mortality estimate validation studies Phase 1										Mortality estimate validation studies Phase 2																														
Activity 6						Purchase & distribute release handling tools																																								
Activity 11					Develop outreach & communications plan/ promote it																																									
Activity 12									Promote sustainable angling knowledge & stakeholder engagement																																					
Activity 13																																Final Report														





# Next Steps

- Start collecting data
  - At-sea observers
  - Reef fish validation surveys
- HD survey baseline report
- RFP collaborative study(ies)
- Phase II Launch
  - Education module
  - Device distribution
  - Expand outreach







Questions?