SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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August 15, 2025

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program
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Arlington, VA 22201

We are pleased to submit the proposal titled, "FY26: Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the *SAFMC Release* Citizen Science Project". The proposal objectives are summarized below:

- Continue data collection through the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project on released shallow-water grouper (Black, Gag, Red, Scamp, Yellowfin and Yellowmouth Groupers; Red Hind; Rock Hind; Coney and Graysby) and Red Snapper in the South Atlantic
- Continue opportunistic strategies to recruit fishermen for the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project
- Enhance *SAFMC Release*'s participant retention and reactivation within the project

The proposed work will help address key research needs on released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper – characterizing the size of released fish and helping to better understand how many released fish survive. Data collection is done via the SciFish platform, using ACCSP data standards and making the data more easily accessible for assessment and management.

This proposal is being submitted as a first-year maintenance project. It will build on the work that will be done through the "FY25: Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the *SAFMC Release* Citizen Science Project" and work from the FY20-FY22 ACCSP funded SciFish projects.

This proposal has been revised based on the reviewers' feedback. Committee members asked that we address whether the biological module was the appropriate primary priority as some members potentially saw this as a bycatch proposal. We have addressed this below and within the proposal where applicable.

The project PI and collaborators feel the primary priority for this proposal should be biological. While the focus of SAFMC Release is on released fish, the primary data collected are lengths of snapper grouper species, several of which are in the top 25% of the biological matrix. Keeping biological as the primary priority will be consistent with past ACCSP proposals that included SAFMC Release and were successfully funded (FY25 SAFMC Release proposal and FY20-FY22 SciFish proposals). The primary (biological) and secondary (bycatch) program priority percentages for this proposal have been adjusted slightly in response to the Committee's feedback. In this submission, the bold text indicates sections that help with the ranking process and yellow highlighted text indicates changes from our initial submission.

Please let us know if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Best,

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Applicant Names:	South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC)
Project Title:	FY26: Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the *SAFMC Release* Citizen Science Project
Project Consultants:	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR)
Project Type:	Maintenance (first year)
Requested Award Amount:	$132,994
Requested Reward Period:	One year upon receipt of funds
Submission Date:	August 15, 2025

FY26 Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Proposal for the SAFMC

OBJECTIVES:

- Continue data collection through the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project on released shallow-water grouper (Black, Gag, Red, Scamp, Yellowfin and Yellowmouth Groupers; Red Hind; Rock Hind; Coney and Graysby) and Red Snapper in the South Atlantic
- Continue opportunistic strategies to recruit fishermen for the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project
- Enhance *SAFMC Release*'s participant retention and reactivation within the project

NEED:

Fishery managers consider the biology and sustainability of a fish stock in concert with socio-economic values of the resource and fishery when developing fishery management plans. Despite substantial efforts, perennial data gaps still exist. If addressed, new data would be useful in developing improved stock assessment models and associated management considerations.

Citizen science is growing in the United States and other countries (McKinley et al. 2017) and has been used for research, management, policy, and public engagement (Poisson et al. 2020). **A growing number of publications has shown that diverse citizen science projects can produce data on par with traditional scientific data when properly designed, implemented, and evaluated (McKinley et al. 2017, Kosmala et al. 2016, Freitag et al. 2016). Past studies have found that citizen science programs can provide timely and non-biased information on fisheries (Jiorle et al. 2016, Gundelund et al. 2021, Johnston et al. 2021, Bellquist et al. 2022, and Oremland et al. 2022).** Indeed, citizen science approaches are currently being investigated to address state and federal management needs including catch at size, shark depredation, biological data, and post release fishing mortality. Examples of this can be seen in recent efforts by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (SAFMC) *SAFMC Release* project, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries' Catch U Later project, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries' Striped Bass Citizen Science Project, and Florida Atlantic University's Shark Depredation Project. NOAA Fisheries recently published a technical memorandum that highlights examples of citizen science data being used in stock assessments and noted there is potential to increase and improve the use of citizen science within the Agency (Furnish et al. 2025). Additionally, **ACCSP recognized the potential of citizen science to fill data gaps and developed the SciFish platform to support, develop, and administer this type of research.**

Discard mortality has been an increasing contributor to the total mortality experienced by many stocks and is a major source of mortality for Red Snapper as well as other species in the snapper-grouper complex (SEDAR 73, SEDAR 2021a). Importantly, released fish are not available for sampling by typical dockside monitoring programs. In the South Atlantic, observer coverage ranges from limited in commercial and for-hire fisheries to non-existent in private recreational fisheries. As such, there is often no or limited information available to characterize the size and fate of these losses for stock assessment modeling. **Improving information on released fish is commonly highlighted in stock assessment research recommendations and is often a top priority in agency research plans. This project will focus on characterizing the size distribution of shallow-water grouper and Red**

Snapper releases in the South Atlantic region and gathering information to help understand how many of these releases survive. In the ACCSP request for 2026 proposals, improved recreational fishery discard and release data as well as biological sampling for recreational fisheries separate from MRIP are the #3 and #5 recreational priorities, respectively. Additionally, Red Snapper, Gag Grouper, Red Grouper, and Scamp Grouper are in the top 25% of the biological priority matrix, and the snapper grouper hook and line fishery is in the top 25% of the bycatch matrix. Discard characterization and information on barotrauma mitigation practices are priorities in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (SAFMC) Research and Monitoring Plan for 2023-2027 and for the SAFMC's Citizen Science Program.

The *SAFMC Release* project was developed through the SAFMC's Citizen Science Program. It provides a streamlined approach for fishermen to provide a photograph of released fish along with details such as length, release location and depth caught, condition, and use of barotrauma mitigation techniques. The project focuses on collecting data on the size of released fish and information that helps characterize how many released fish survive. *SAFMC Release* began as a pilot project in June 2019 partnering with recreational, for-hire, and commercial fishermen to gather information on released Scamp Grouper via the *SAFMC Release* mobile application. In August 2021, *SAFMC Release* transitioned to the ACCSP's SciFish mobile application/platform and expanded to collect information on all shallow-water grouper species. In April 2022, Red Snapper was added to the project.

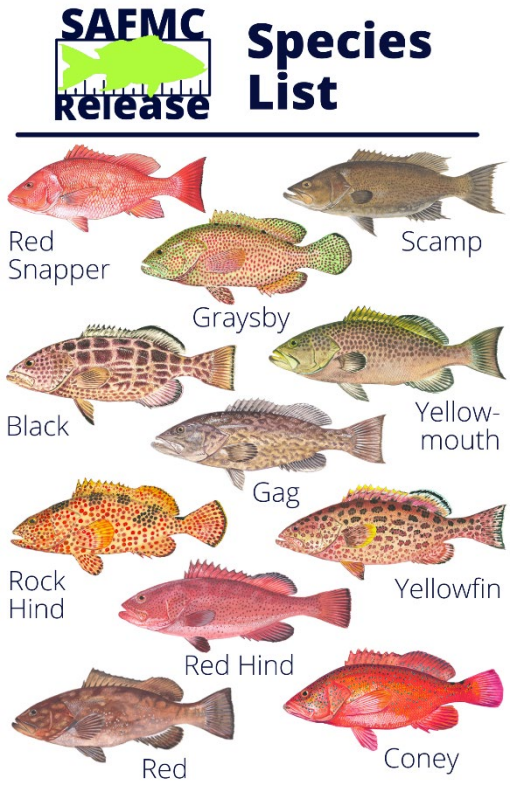

Figure 1. *SAFMC Release* Species List.

Recruitment for *SAFMC Release* has largely been through opportunistic outreach strategies (e.g., tackle shop visits, fishing seminars and expos, SAFMC-related meetings, online and media, etc.) and has been limited by capacity and resources (e.g., personnel, time, funding). Through collaborations

with the SAFMC's Best Fishing Practices initiative, Sea Grant, state agencies, and other partners, the project has reached broader audiences than Citizen Science Program staff could have done alone. In spring 2022, the Council collaborated with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) to mail information to 10,000 NC recreational fishing license holders to recruit participants to the Catch U Later and *SAFMC Release* projects. In June 2023, the Council collaborated with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FL FWC) on an email solicitation to Florida State Reef Fish Designees on the Atlantic Coast to encourage participation in FL FWC's State Reef Fish Survey and recruit fishermen to the *SAFMC Release* project. The Council is currently collaborating with NOAA Fisheries, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) on a mailing to SC and GA recreational saltwater fishing license/permit holders to recruit participants to the *SAFMC Release* project. A small pilot mailing was sent to a subset of SC and GA anglers in July 2025, and a larger mailing is planned in 2026 as part of the FY25 ACCSP-funded proposal.

The number of project participants and data submissions within the *SAFMC Release* project has been growing over time. Each year, *SAFMC Release* develops Annual Data Summaries which are initially shared with project participants and then posted to the project webpage. *SAFMC Release* Annual Data Summaries are available at the following links: *SAFMC Release* Data Summary 2021, *SAFMC Release* Data Summary 2022, *SAFMC Release* Data Summary 2023, and *SAFMC Release* Data Summary 2024. Aggregate length composition for Red Snapper and aggregate release treatment by depth figures are provided below as an example of the data collected through the project over time (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

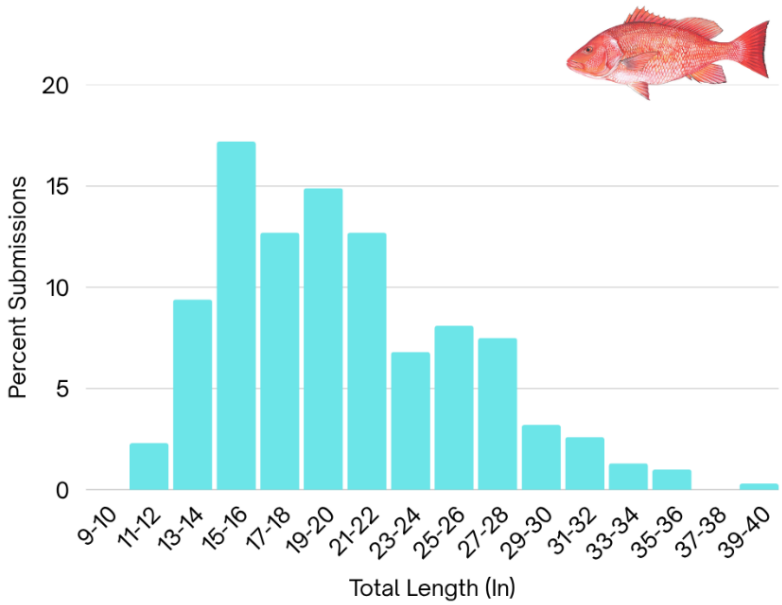

Figure 2. Red Snapper release length frequency logged through *SAFMC Release*, April 2022 – May 2025. Red Snapper was added to *SAFMC Release* in April 2022.

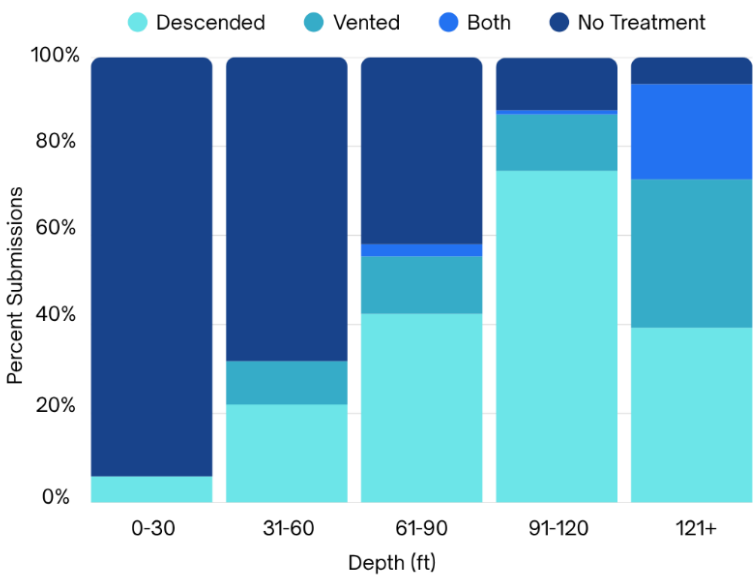

Figure 3. Release treatment by depth logged through *SAFMC Release*, April 2022 – May 2025.

In the recent SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop (April 2025), *SAFMC Release* length data were recommended for use in the assessment by the SEDAR 90 Data Workshop Panel. *SAFMC Release* data were also considered in the development of release mortality estimates. Additionally, SEDAR 90 research recommendations include developing more opportunities (e.g., citizen science, catch cards) to collect release lengths from the recreational fleet and gathering more information on barotrauma mitigation technique usage rates – supporting the continuation and expansion of the *SAFMC Release* project.

When new participants sign up for *SAFMC Release*, they are asked to share where they heard about the project via an open-ended question. Based on these data, **in-person outreach (47%) and directed recruitment mailings in collaboration with state partners (NCDMF mailing – 17% and the FL FWC solicitation email – 10%) have been critical recruitment strategies for the project to date (Figure 4).**

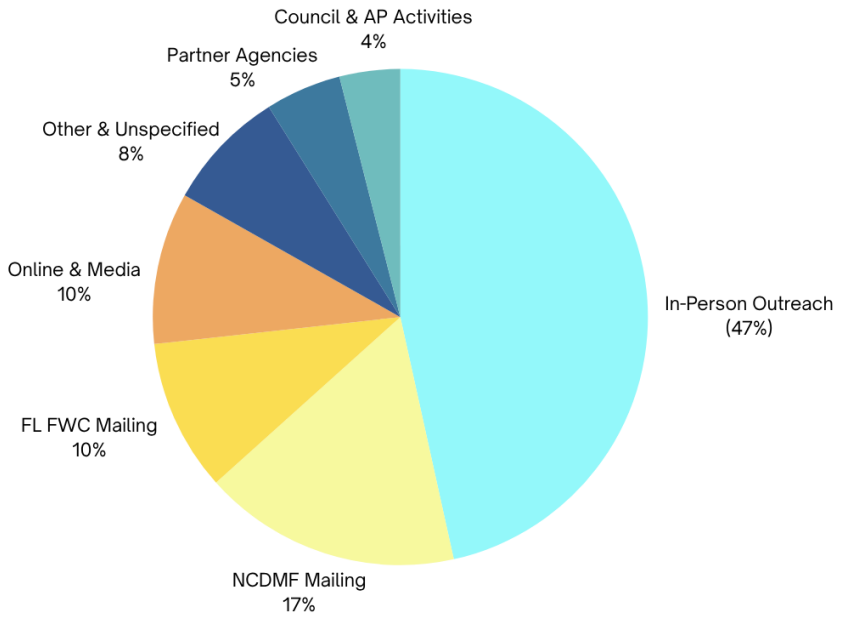

Figure 4. *SAFMC Release* participants by origin (January 2022 – May 2025).

Through *SAFMC Release* outreach efforts, staff have been able to build new and strengthen existing relationships with project participants and other stakeholders within the fishing community. However, participant recruitment and retention remain a significant challenge. **This proposal will support the continuation of opportunistic outreach strategies to assist with participant recruitment and relationship building within the fishing community, focusing on in-person outreach that has been critical for project participation.**

To help with participant retention, *SAFMC Release* launched a Participant Recognition Program (PRP) in spring 2023. When volunteers reach identified milestones, they receive recognition or awards from Sea Grant. Participant recognition programs are often beneficial to improve volunteer retention within citizen science projects (Robinson et al. 2021). Such programs have been shown to increase the quantity of data submissions and support retention by providing recurring volunteer engagement opportunities (Dickinson et al. 2012; Diekert et al. 2023). Thus, a recognition program is an important element of a retention strategy for the *SAFMC Release* project.

Programs such as Catch a Florida Memory (CAFM), in which anglers submit catch information to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to earn rewards, have had success in motivating continued participation by providing a variety of incentives for participants (J. Christopherson, personal communication, May 1, 2024). Of CAFM participants surveyed in 2023, 88% reported that earning prizes was 'somewhat important' or 'very important' motivation for participating in the program. Approximately 54% of respondents reported being 'very satisfied' with the prize packages they earn (internal CAFM data). Also cited as contributing to program success are goals that re-engage volunteers after reaching all available milestones (J. Christopherson, personal communication, May 1, 2024).

Due to SAFMC funding limitations and stipulations, *SAFMC Release* initially provided only public recognition (e.g., named in monthly newsletters or annual data summary) to participants who met PRP

milestones. In 2024, the Council partnered with Sea Grant, which adopted some of the PRP milestones (2024 PRP milestones). As participants meet these adopted milestones, they earn Sea Grant "recognition packets" and may win best fishing practices gear. However, Sea Grant can only provide best fishing practices-related items. As participants continue to meet milestones and accumulate a variety of best fishing practices gear, the motivation to earn these items is likely to wane. **The success demonstrated by programs such as CAFM indicates that incorporating a more substantial recognition program into *SAFMC Release*'s retention strategy can increase the quantity of data collected through the project, improve participant satisfaction, and support the long-term engagement of participants.**

The Council has continued the partnership with Sea Grant on the *SAFMC Release* 2025 PRP milestones and is also collaborating with Sea Grant on a new initiative in 2025 – the Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo. The Rodeo is a three-month challenge (May 1 – July 31, 2025) hosted by Sea Grant where South Atlantic fishermen can earn a chance to win Sea Grant giveaways by submitting entries in *SAFMC Release* that include photos that can be used for data validation. The South Atlantic Release Rodeo is working to increase participation in *SAFMC Release*, encourage *SAFMC Release* submissions with photos that can be used for data validation, and help get best fishing practices gear distributed to anglers. Results from the South Atlantic Release Rodeo will be used to inform future *SAFMC Release* recruitment and retention strategies, in particular to help evaluate if the use of periodic tournaments can help encourage project participation and increase submissions that can be used for data validation.

RESULTS & BENEFITS:

This project will continue to collect data on released fish via *SAFMC Release*, building on the work done through the FY20-FY22 ACCSP-funded SciFish projects and that will be done via the FY25 ACCSP *SAFMC Release* project. Observer funding for most fisheries along the Atlantic Coast has never been adequate. Many fisheries, such as the private recreational or the commercial snapper grouper hook and line, are challenging to sample through conventional observer techniques due to their small vessels which could present safety concerns, potential liability issues, and logistical challenges. Although a few specific fisheries are highlighted in this project, **the proportion of catch attributed to releases is increasing in many popular fisheries along the Atlantic Coast so the insights, tools, and best practices developed through this project may be beneficial to other partners.**

***SAFMC Release* will continue collecting biological information on the component of catch that is released, addressing the ACCSP FY26 Request for Proposal priority 1 and Recreational Technical Committee priority 3. *SAFMC Release* will continue to collect biological and fishery data that is independent of APAIS/MRIP, addressing Recreational Technical Committee priority 5.**

Additionally, as one of the initial projects in SciFish, *SAFMC Release* continues to help test the SciFish mobile app, project builder, and account creation portal. SAFMC staff work closely with ACCSP to address any issues that arise, helping to improve the platform which will benefit all partners who have or are interested in developing projects within SciFish.

The specific benefits to each data type and the rank of the target species within the biological and bycatch priority matrices included in the project are addressed below.

Primary Program Priority: Biological Sampling: 85%

The primary focus of the *SAFMC Release* project is to collect length data on released shallow water grouper (Black, Gag, Red, Scamp, Yellowfin and Yellowmouth Groupers; Red Hind; Rock Hind; Coney and Graysby) and Red Snapper. Through this proposal biological information from the commercial, for-hire, and recreational fisheries will continue to be collected through *SAFMC Release* for these species. Gag Grouper, Red Grouper, Scamp Grouper, and Red Snapper are in the top 25% of the ACCSP biological sampling priority matrix. All of these species are in the 'inadequate sampling' quadrants of the matrix and Red Snapper is in the 'high priority, inadequate sampling' quadrant. *SAFMC Release* data collection includes:

- Data collected for each trip: trip type (commercial, recreational, headboat, charter), date, state, user (ACCSP ID);
- Data collected for each fish released: species (user's determination), length (based on ACCSP standards), location (state required, specific latitude/longitude optional), depth, time, fate (dead or alive release), hook type, hook location, use of barotrauma mitigation (descending device, venting, line cut), shark depredation, and photograph (to validate and evaluate species IDs and lengths); and
- Users may also file a 'no fish released' report to share information on harvested fish.

Secondary Module as a by-product: Bycatch: 15%

The snapper-grouper hook and line fleet is ranked in the top quartile of the ACCSP bycatch priority matrix (ranked 2nd out of 17 fleets). Information collected through *SAFMC Release* can help provide information on length of released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper, hook type and hooking location, and release treatment (e.g., use of barotrauma mitigation devices) to supplement the data available through observer coverage and discard logbooks to help characterize the bycatch within this fleet.

Stock Assessment and Management Benefits and Impact:

By continuing data collection on released fish through the *SAFMC Release* project, the positive impact of this project to both stock assessments and management could be substantial and realized. Stock assessments rely upon accurate information on total catch and removals from the stock and accurately assigning those removals to year classes. For fish that are landed, these requirements can be addressed through straightforward methods such as catch reporting or creel surveys to estimate removals and dockside sampling to collect length measurements and age samples. Surveying and dockside sampling approaches do not work when the fish are released on the water. Using the South Atlantic as an example, limited information is available to classify the size composition of released fish in the commercial snapper grouper hook and line fleet, the private recreational fleet, or the charter fleet. In some areas, fisheries observers are used to collect information on released fish, but observer coverage is limited due in part to high cost. Moreover, even if funding were available, logistics and liabilities remain a concern for some fisheries due to the small size of some **commercial and most private recreational vessels as well as lack of safety gear requirements on private recreational vessels. Limited observer coverage is available for the headboat fleet and charter fleet (FL only), but changes in fleet size, targeted species, and behavior raise concerns about the validity of such data to characterize removals from other fishery sectors. This lack of information is a major source of stock assessment uncertainty, and assumptions must be made to assign released fish into length and thus age**

classes.

In years past, the lack of accurate information on discarded fish was not a major assessment concern or source of uncertainty as landed fish generally accounted for the majority of stock removals. However, this is changing as regulations and fishing behavior are leading to increased discarding. The number and percentage of released fish has increased over the past decade as management has implemented accountability measures to shorten landings seasons when annual catch limits are exceeded. The most recent Red Grouper assessment (SEDAR 53, SEDAR 2017) indicated that over fifty percent of the fishing mortality experienced by Red Grouper is due to discard losses. Given that this stock was found to be overfished and overfishing was occurring, these discard removals are significant, and therefore the assumptions made regarding their size and composition are critical. In this instance, the length composition and selectivity for the discard losses was based on observer records from the headboat fishery and it was assumed these data were representative of all fishery sectors. As noted above, there are limited data to test this assumption so its impact on assessment uncertainty and bias is unknown. The most recent assessment of South Atlantic Gag Grouper (SEDAR 71, SEDAR 2021b) indicated the stock was overfished and overfishing was occurring. Although discards accounted for a small proportion of fishing mortality in the assessment, the restrictive management measures implemented in response to the assessment through SAFMC's Snapper Grouper Amendment 53 will increase the proportion of discards within the fishery. SEDAR 71 relied on limited headboat observer data to characterize the size of discards from the recreational fleet since no data were available from the charter and private recreational sectors. Having additional data sources to supplement these data will become increasingly important as the discards in the Gag fishery increase. In SEDAR 73, the most recent South Atlantic Red Snapper assessment, the stock was found to be overfished and undergoing overfishing. In recent years, discards have accounted for over 90% of removals so characterizing their size is critical. Length compositions and selectivity for discards were based on limited commercial, headboat, and charter (Florida only) observer data. Sampling recommendations in the report noted that it remains important to monitor discards year-round and any potential methodological or sampling improvements should be implemented if possible. Having additional information to help characterize the substantial discards would help address this critical need.

A similar lack of information exists to classify the depth where fish are captured and released as well as **the use of barotrauma mitigation techniques, such as venting tools and descending devices. Fishing depth is positively correlated with release mortality rates for most species due to the impacts of barotrauma. However, it is challenging to estimate release mortality for use in a stock assessment without information on the depths at which fish are caught and when the species is impacted by barotrauma.**

Small improvements in estimates of discard mortality, based on data rather than assumption, can result in large changes in the estimated removals from a fish stock. Based on the results of ACCSP-funded headboat observer studies, as cited in the FY2019 Recreational Technical Committee proposal, the Red Snapper release mortality was reduced from 37% to 28.5% due to the use of circle hooks. Applying this percentage change to the estimated 2018 MRIP discards reduced the discard losses to the population by 274,000 fish. This is a substantial reduction since the 2018 recreational annual catch limit was only 29,656 fish. The ability to accurately characterize discards could substantially improve stock assessments and management decisions.

The SAFMC's Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29, which required a descending device be rigged and ready on-board any vessel fishing for or possessing snapper grouper species, was implemented in July 2020. Many stakeholders regarded this as a positive management action. However, more information is needed on when and where barotrauma mitigation techniques, like descending devices, are being used. When reviewing the SEDAR 73 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) assessment at their April 2021 meeting, the SAFMC's Science and Statistical Committee raised concerns about the level of descender device usage due to the lack of information on how widespread usage is in the fishery. This is of note since the assumed level has an impact on recommended catch levels -- highlighting the need for this data.

The *SAFMC Release* data were presented for consideration at the recent SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop in April 2025 (Byrd et al. 2025). *SAFMC Release* and another citizen science project, MyFishCount (data available from 2017-2020), were the only Red Snapper release length data available for charter boats north of Florida and from the private recreational sector. *SAFMC Release* and MyFishCount Red Snapper release length data were both recommended for use in the assessment by the SEDAR 90 Data Workshop Panel. *SAFMC Release* data were also considered in the development of release mortality estimates for SEDAR 90. Additionally, SEDAR 90 Data Workshop research recommendations include developing more opportunities (e.g., citizen science, catch cards) to collect release lengths from the recreational fleet and gathering more information on barotrauma mitigation technique usage rates. These recommendations support the continuation and expansion of the *SAFMC Release* project. Additionally, *SAFMC Release* data will be presented for consideration at the South Atlantic Gag assessment which is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2026.

DATA DELIVERY PLAN:
The SciFish application for the *SAFMC Release* project will collect and deliver data directly to ACCSP through the SciFish API and will be stored in SAFIS. Data can be entered by fishermen when no internet connection is available and later uploaded to SAFIS when a connection becomes available.

APPROACH:

Task A: Continue and expand current *SAFMC Release* recruitment strategies

Roles of Collaborators

SAFMC

- Visit tackle shops in South Atlantic states (NC, SC, GA, and FL) to distribute *SAFMC Release* and Best Fishing Practices materials for project promotion and recruitment
- Participate in relevant fishing expos, seminars, and collaborations with fishing organizations to promote *SAFMC Release* and best fishing practices as well as recruit new project participants
- Collaborate with state partners to share information on *SAFMC Release* at events and via other outreach efforts and communication platforms, as appropriate
- Share *SAFMC Release* project information at Council related meetings and via Council communication platforms (e.g., South Atlantic Bite newsletter, social media)

- Explore collaborations with fishing clubs on a release focused challenge or release focused challenges
- Set up and monitor *SAFMC Release* project sign up forms
- Create user accounts and onboard new participants (sharing login details, training materials, add to *SAFMC Release* email list & Participant Recognition Program (PRP) if opt in, troubleshoot SciFish login/app issues)

SCDNR & GADNR

- Consult on participant recruitment strategies

Task B: *SAFMC Release* Participant Retention Strategies

Overview

- The *SAFMC Release* team will employ a multi-pronged approach to support year-round participant engagement with the project, including regular participant communications, development of data summaries, and the expansion of the PRP.
- To support engagement with the *SAFMC Release* project year-round, recognition program milestones will reward participants using multiple strategies. Figure 5 outlines the proposed strategies for milestones, associated rewards, and other forms of recognition.

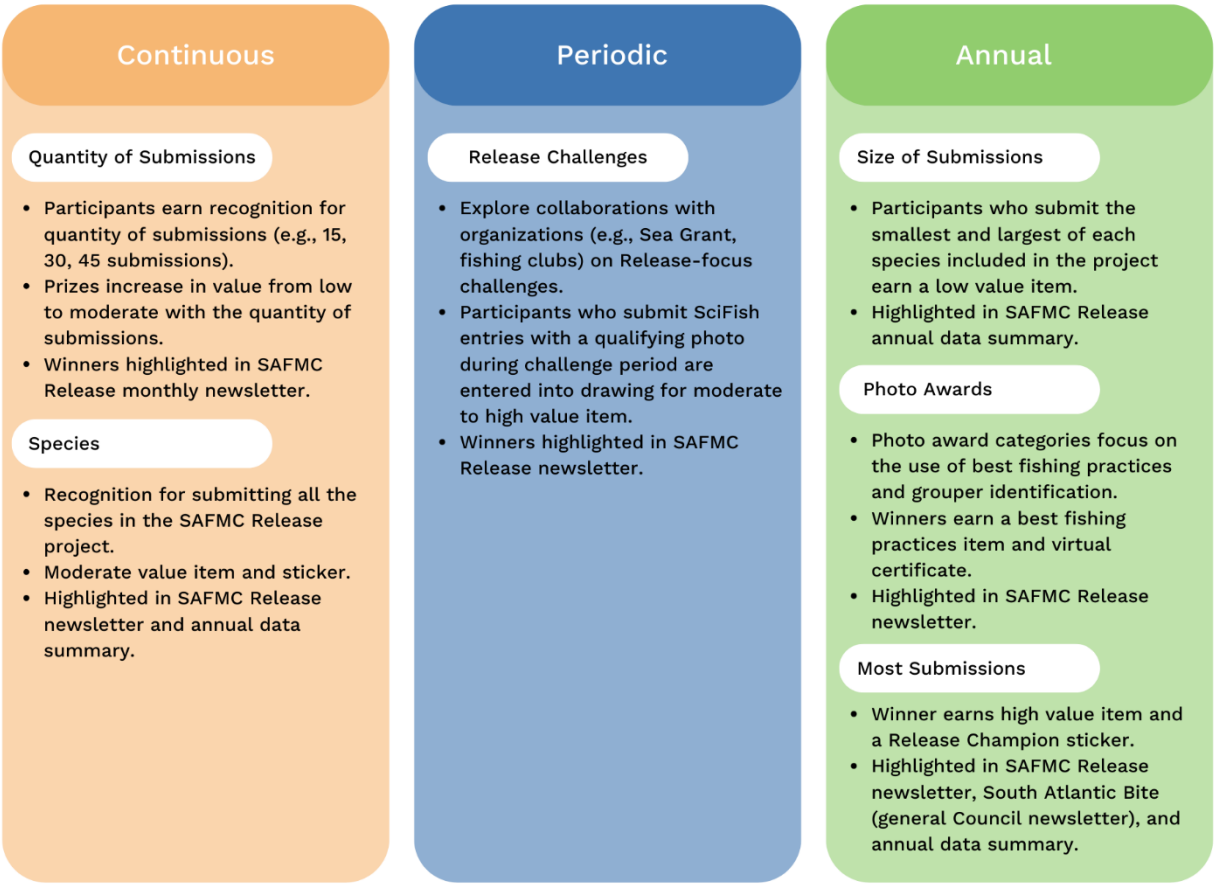

Figure 5. *SAFMC Release* proposed PRP milestones, rewards, and recognitions.

Bold text indicates text that helps with the ranking process.
Yellow highlighted text indicates changes from the original submission.

Roles of Collaborators
SAFMC

- Participant Communications
    - Distribute monthly e-newsletters to participants
    - Email and phone communication with participants to thank them for submissions, troubleshoot issues, etc.
- Annual Data Summary
    - Provide to participants and post to project webpage
    - Explore additional data summary options for participants
- Participant Recognition Program (PRP)
    - Monitor participant progress
    - Provide participant awards for PRP milestones

SCDNR & GADNR

- Consult on participant retention strategies

Task C: Data collection, QA/QC, and analysis

Roles of Collaborators
SAFMC

- Submit data automatically via app to SAFIS/Data Warehouse
- Provide QA/QC for data collected through project; edit/correct as necessary
- Share summary data with project partners
- Make data available for assessment and management, as necessary
- Continue to explore long term solutions for addressing QA/QC and validation needs of the data (e.g., photographic and species identification), considering volunteers and citizen science approaches
- Review success of recruitment and retention strategies and make recommendations for future efforts

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION:

The *SAFMC Release* project partners with fishermen to collect data on released fish in South Atlantic waters in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and the east coast of Florida through the Florida Keys. Project consultants include SCDNR and GADNR. Letters of support have been provided by Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FL FWC), SCDNR, and North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF; see Appendix 1). Data collected through the project will be available for consideration in South Atlantic stock assessments and management.

In addition to contributing data for consideration in stock assessments and management, this project will collect information on the effectiveness of various recruitment and retention strategies for *SAFMC Release*. With the growing interest in using citizen science as a tool to help supplement marine fisheries data collection, the information gained on volunteer recruitment and retention could be informative for other citizen science projects being pursued by partners along the Atlantic coast.

FUNDING TRANSITION PLAN:
Project PI's will be developing additional proposals and exploring other funding opportunities to help support additional years of funding for this project.

MILESTONE SCHEDULE:
Table 1. Milestone Schedule

Task	Month											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
SAFMC Release Opportunistic Recruitment Outreach Strategies: Tackle shop outreach, seminars, fishing expos, etc.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
SAFMC Release Retention Strategies: Regular Communication, Newsletters, PRP coordination & implementation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Data Collection, QA/QC & Analysis	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Semi & Annual Report Writing						x					x	x

PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS MEASUREMENTS:

Table 2. Project Accomplishments Measurements

Project Component	Deliverables
SAFMC Release Opportunistic Recruitment Outreach	Continue outreach to promote *SAFMC Release* in South Atlantic states with a target to visit tackle shops and collaborate on a seminar/outreach event at least once per state; new participants recruited to *SAFMC Release* via in-person and online outreach
SAFMC Release Retention Strategies	Monthly newsletters and annual data summary distributed to project participants; continuous, periodic, and annual milestones incorporated into Participant Recognition Program (PRP); increase number of participants submitting data and meeting PRP milestones
Data Collection, QA/QC & Analysis	Participants continue to submit data on target species using the ACCSP SciFish application; QA/QC completed; data available for management and assessment, as needed
Report Writing	Progress and final reports submitted

REFERENCES:

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FY26 COST SUMMARY (BUDGET):

Item	ACCSP Share	Partner Share	Total
PERSONNEL COSTS			
SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator – 12 months	$48,965		
SAFMC Release hourly position (part-time)	$10,400		
SAFMC Personnel Julia Byrd, Citizen Science Program (10%)		$9,942	
FRINGE			
SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator – 12 months	$28,268		
SAFMC Personnel Julia Byrd, Citizen Science Program (10%)		$5,772	
SUPPLIES			
Promotional materials	$4,000		
Participant Recognition Program incentives	$15,000		
Software packages	$3,300		
TRAVEL			
Travel to support outreach and promotional opportunities for *SAFMC Release*	$5,714		
Indirect Costs (15% of non-contract costs)	$17,347		
TOTAL	**$132,994**	**$15,714**	**$148,708**
Percentage	**89%**	**11%**	**100%**

Bold text indicates text that helps with the ranking process.
Yellow highlighted text indicates changes from the original submission.

FY26 BUDGET NARRATIVE:

Personnel ($59,365): Personnel funds of $48,965 will support 12 months of the SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator position who leads daily project management for the *SAFMC Release* project. The remaining personnel funds ($10,400) will be used by SAFMC to hire a part-time hourly at $20/hour for 520 hours for the *SAFMC Release* project to help with account creation, coordination of the Participant Recognition Program, and QA/QC.

Fringe ($28,268): Fringe funds will support 12 months of benefits for the SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator position. Fringe benefits are charged at 58% of total compensation.

Supplies ($22,300): Funds will be used to print promotional materials (e.g., wallet cards, rack cards, stickers, etc.) to promote and recruit users for *SAFMC Release*. Costs for promotional materials range from wallet cards (~$0.05 each) to stickers (~$1.50 each). Using an average cost of $0.77 per item, $4,000 will allow us to print ~5,195 items for distribution. The PRP will include low, medium, and high value items when participants meet identified milestones:

- Low value: $10-$20 (average $15) purchases ~790 items for $11,844
- Medium value: $25-$100 (average $63) purchases ~12 items for $756
- High value: $200-$600 (average $400) purchases 6 items for $2,400

Costs for software include an annual subscription to Wufoo ($330) for account creation online forms and an upgrade to the shiny application to provide an additional tool for project participants to explore and query their data.

Travel ($5,714): Travel by partners will be used to promote *SAFMC Release* by visiting tackle shops, fishing clubs and expos, and other related venues to allow for distribution of outreach and promotional materials. Funds are requested to support travel for staff members for 4 trips, approximately 3-4 days each. Costs are estimated for a total of 14 hotel nights at $189/night ($2,646), 16 days per diem at $83/day ($1,328), ~1200 miles at $0.70/mile ($840), and two airplane fares at ~$450/ticket ($900). Travel rate estimates are based on federal reimbursement and per diem rates.

Indirect ($17,347): Indirect charges of 15% (per communication with the NOAA Fisheries SERO grants office) are applied to the non-contract budget items for a total of $17,347.

FY25 COST SUMMARY (BUDGET):

Item	ACCSP Share	Partner Share	Total
PERSONNEL COSTS			
SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator – 6 months	$24,024		
SAFMC Release hourly position (part-time)	$10,400		
SAFMC Personnel Julia Byrd, Citizen Science Program (10%)		$9,700	
NOAA Personnel Drew Cathey, SEFSC (5%) Lauren Dolinger Few, S & T (~ 1 week)		$3,950 $3,400	
FRINGE			
SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator – 6 months	$14,294		
SAFMC Personnel Julia Byrd, Citizen Science Program (10%)		$5,772	
CONTRACT			
NSAR recruitment mailing	$54,363		
SUPPLIES			
Promotional materials	$4,000		
Participant Recognition Program incentives	$15,000		
Software packages	$3,300		
TRAVEL			
Travel to support outreach and promotional opportunities for *SAFMC Release*	$4,430		

Indirect Costs (10% of non-contract costs)	$7,545		
TOTAL	**$137,356**	**$22,822**	**$160,187**
Percentage	**86%**	**14%**	**100%**

FY25 BUDGET NARRATIVE:

Personnel ($34,424): Personnel funds of $24,024 will support 6 months of the SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator position who leads daily project management for the *SAFMC Release* project. The remaining personnel funds ($10,400) will be used by SAFMC to hire a part-time hourly at $20/hour for 520 hours for the *SAFMC Release* project to help with account creation, coordination of the Participant Recognition Program, and QA/QC.

Fringe ($14,294): Fringe funds will support 6 months of benefits for the SAFMC Citizen Science Project Coordinator position. Fringe benefits charged at 59.5% of total compensation.

Contractual ($54,363): NOAA Fisheries will contract with Gallup to coordinate and implement the NSAR recruitment mailings to GA and SC. Target is to send 24,000 recruitment letters (12,000 to each state). Costs are estimated at ~$2.27 per piece for $54,363.

Supplies ($22,300): Partners will utilize funds to print promotional materials (e.g., wallet cards, rack cards, stickers, etc.) to promote and recruit users for *SAFMC Release*. Cost for promotional materials range from wallet cards (~$0.05 each) to stickers (~$1.50 each). Using an average cost of $0.77 per item, $4,000 will allow us to print ~5,195 items for distribution. The PRP will include low, medium, and high value items when participants meet identified milestones. Cost for low value items range between $10-$20, medium value items range between $25-$100, and high value items range between $200-$600. Using an average cost of $15 for low value items - $13,000 will allow us to distribute ~860 items; an average of $63 for medium value items -$500 will allow us to distribute ~8 items; and an average of $400 for high value items -$1500 will allow us to distribute ~4 items. Costs for software include an annual subscription to Wufoo ($330) for online forms for account creation and an upgrade to the shiny application to provide an additional tool for project participants to explore and query their data.

Travel ($4,430): Travel by partners will be used to promote *SAFMC Release* by visiting tackle shops, fishing clubs and expos, and other related venues to allow for distribution of outreach and promotional materials. Funds are requested to support travel for staff members for 4 trips, approximately 3-4 days each. Costs are estimated for a total of 14 hotel nights at $120/night ($1,680), 16 days per diem at $75/day ($1,200), ~1200 miles at $0.625/mile ($750), and two airplane fares at ~$400/ticket ($800). Travel rate estimates are based on federal reimbursement and per diem rates.

Indirect ($7,545): Indirect charges of 10% are applied to the non-contract budget items for a total of $7,545. The contract with Gallup will be administered through NOAA Fisheries, so was excluded from the indirect calculations.

Table 3. Maintenance Project History

Fiscal Year	Title	Cost	Results
2025	FY25: Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the *SAFMC Release* Citizen Science Project	$137,356	This project will continue data collection through the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project on released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper via the SciFish platform; will use license data from the National Saltwater Angler Registry to recruit private recreational fishermen from SC and GA for the *SAFMC Release* project via a solicitation mailing; continue opportunistic strategies to recruit fishermen to *SAFMC Release* (e.g., tackle shop visits, seminars, fishing expos, social media) and enhance participant retention and reactivation within the project. FY25 funding has not yet been allocated or received. ACCSP provided guidance that PI's should not start work on FY25 projects until funding is available. Although work has not started on the FY25 project, data collection, outreach, and volunteer engagement efforts are on-going for the *SAFMC Release* project.

Summary of Proposal for Ranking – Condensed Version

- **Achieved Goals:** **The 'FY25 Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the *SAFMC Release* Citizen Science Project' will continue data collection through the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project on released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper via the SciFish platform; use license data from the National Saltwater Angler Registry to recruit private recreational fishermen from SC and GA for the *SAFMC Release* project via a solicitation mailing; continue opportunistic strategies to recruit fishermen to *SAFMC Release* (e.g., tackle shop visits, seminars, fishing expos, social media) and enhance participant retention and reactivation within the project.**

  FY25 funding has not been allocated or received yet. ACCSP provided guidance that PI's should not start work on FY25 projects until funding is available. Although work has not started on the FY25 project, data collection, outreach, and volunteer engagement efforts are on-going for the *SAFMC Release* project. This proposal will build on the work that will be done through the FY25 *SAFMC Release* project.

- **Data Delivery Plan:** **The SciFish application for the *SAFMC Release* project will collect and deliver data directly to ACCSP through the SciFish API and will be stored in SAFIS. Data can be entered by fishermen when no internet connection is available and later uploaded to SAFIS when a connection becomes available.**

- **Level of Funding:** **This is a Year 1 maintenance proposal. Funding for the FY26 proposal decreased from the FY25 proposal by approximately 3%.**

- **Properly Prepared:** **This proposal follows the guidelines under the ACCSP Funding Decision Process Document.**

- **Merit:** **This project supports the continuation of the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project that addresses key research needs on released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper – helping to characterize the size of released fish and helping better understand how many of those released fish survive. Biological information will be collected on released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper. Of these species, four (Gag Grouper, Red Grouper, Scamp Grouper, and Red Snapper) are in the top 25% of the ACCSP biological sampling priority matrix. Data collection is done via the SciFish platform, using ACCSP standards and making the data easily accessible for assessment and management. *SAFMC Release* data were recommended for use by the SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop Panel and SEDAR 90 research recommendations include developing more opportunities (e.g., citizen science, catch cards) to collect release lengths from the recreational fleet and gathering more information on barotrauma mitigation technique usage rates – supporting the continuation and expansion of the *SAFMC Release* project. *SAFMC Release* data will be presented for consideration at the South Atlantic Gag assessment which is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2026. Additionally, this project will collect information on the effectiveness of various recruitment and retention**

strategies for *SAFMC Release* which could be informative for other citizen science projects along the Atlantic coast.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL FOR RANKINGS:

Proposal Type: **Maintenance**

Primary Program Priority: **Biological 85%**

The primary focus of the *SAFMC Release* project is to collect length data on released shallow water grouper (Black, Gag, Red, Scamp, Yellowfin and Yellowmouth Groupers; Red Hind; Rock Hind; Coney and Graysby) and Red Snapper. Through this proposal biological information from the commercial, for-hire, and recreational fisheries will continue to be collected through *SAFMC Release* for these species. Gag Grouper, Red Grouper, Scamp Grouper, and Red Snapper are in the top 25% of the ACCSP biological sampling priority matrix. All of these species are in the 'inadequate sampling' quadrants and Red Snapper is in the 'high priority, inadequate sampling' quadrant. *SAFMC Release* data collection includes:

- **Data collected for each trip: trip type (commercial, recreational, headboat, charter), date, user (ACCSP ID);**
- **Data collected for each fish released: species (user's determination), length (based on ACCSP standards), location (state required, specific latitude/longitude optional), depth, time, fate (dead or alive release), hook type, hook location, use of barotrauma mitigation (descending device, venting, line cut), shark depredation, and photograph (to validate and evaluate species IDs and lengths); and**
- **Users may also file a 'no fish released' report to share information on harvested fish.**

Data Delivery Plan:

The SciFish application for the *SAFMC Release* project will collect and deliver data directly to ACCSP through the SciFish API and will be stored in SAFIS. Data can be entered by fishermen when no internet connection is available and later uploaded to SAFIS when a connection becomes available.

Project Quality Factors:

- **Multi-partner/Regional impact including broad applications:**
  The *SAFMC Release* project partners with fishermen to collect data on released fish in South Atlantic waters in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and the east coast of Florida through the Florida Keys. Project consultants include SCDNR and GADNR. Letters of support have been provided by FL FWC, SCDNR, and NCDMF. Data collected through the project will be available for consideration in South Atlantic stock assessments and management.

  In addition to contributing data for consideration in stock assessments and management, this project will collect information on the effectiveness of various recruitment and retention strategies for *SAFMC Release*. With the growing interest in using citizen science as a tool to help supplement marine fisheries data collection, the information gained on volunteer recruitment and retention could be informative for other citizen science projects being pursued by partners along the Atlantic coast.

Additionally, as one of the initial projects in SciFish, *SAFMC Release* continues to help test the SciFish mobile app, project builder, and account creation portal. SAFMC staff work closely with ACCSP to address any issues that arise, helping to improve the platform which will benefit all partners who have or are interested in developing projects within SciFish.

- **Contains funding transition plan:**
  Project PI's will be developing additional proposals and exploring other funding opportunities to help support additional years of funding for this project.

- **In-kind contribution: 11%**

- **Improvement in data quality/quantity/timeliness**
  - **Provides improvement in data quality and quantity**
  - **There are currently no data available to assign released shallow water groupers and Red Snapper to length classes other than limited commercial and for-hire observer effort. *SAFMC Release* collects data on length of released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper for commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen.**
  - **There are limited data available to classify the depth where fish are captured and released and the use of barotrauma reduction techniques which are significantly correlated with release mortality rates. The data collected through *SAFMC Release* provides finer scale information on released fish which can help refine the overall release mortality rate applied for a stock assessment.**

Potential secondary module as a by-product: Bycatch (15%)

The snapper-grouper hook and line fleet is ranked in the top quartile of the ACCSP bycatch priority matrix (ranked 2nd out of 17 fleets). Information collected through *SAFMC Release* can help provide information on length of released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper and release treatment (e.g., use of barotrauma mitigation devices) to supplement the data available through observer coverage and discard logbooks to help characterize the bycatch within this fleet.

Impact on stock assessment:

Stock assessment impacts available as a result of this project are significant. Assessments rely on accurate catch data for individual species, accurate assignments of catches to length and thus age classes, and accurate estimates of release mortality to develop total fishery removals. The number and percentage of released fish has increased over the past decade as management has implemented accountability measures to shorten landings seasons when annual catch limits are exceeded. One case in the South Atlantic region of particular interest is Red Snapper. Fishing mortality of recreational released Red Snapper exceeded all other sources of mortality (SEDAR 73). This highlights the importance of released fish and the need to accurately characterize the length or age of the released fish and treatment of released fish that can influence the release mortality rate. Limited data are available to classify the size composition of released fish in the

commercial snapper grouper hook and line fleet, the private recreational fleet, and the charter fleet. When the SAFMC's SSC reviewed recent stock assessments (SEDAR 73 – South Atlantic Red Snapper), the SSC raised concerns about the level of descender device usage due to lack of information on how widespread usage is in the fishery. *SAFMC Release* will provide data to help fill these data gaps on the length of fish released, frequency of recompression treatment, hook location, and depredation.

The *SAFMC Release* data were presented for consideration at the recent SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop in April 2025. *SAFMC Release* Red Snapper release length data were recommended for use in the assessment by the SEDAR 90 Data Workshop Panel. *SAFMC Release* data are also being considered in the development of release mortality estimates for SEDAR 90. Additionally, SEDAR 90 Data Workshop research recommendations include developing more opportunities (e.g., citizen science, catch cards) to collect release lengths from the recreational fleet and gathering more information on barotrauma mitigation technique usage rates – supporting the continuation and expansion of the *SAFMC Release* project. *SAFMC Release* data will be presented for consideration at the South Atlantic Gag assessment which is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2026.

<u>Impact on management:</u>
Management impacts would be significant. In years past, the lack of accurate information on discarded fish was not a major management concern or source of uncertainty as landed fish generally accounted for the majority of stock removals. However, this is changing as regulations and fishing behavior are leading to increased discarding for many species within the South Atlantic. Management reference points (e.g., overfishing limit, allowable biological catch) are driven by stock assessment results – so improving information available to characterize the size of released fish in stock assessments has a substantial impact on management. Additionally, the Council has been discussing actions that could decrease the number of released fish and/or increase survivorship of released fish, within the snapper grouper fishery. Better understanding of the use of barotrauma mitigation techniques, such as those collected through *SAFMC Release*, could be incorporated into management strategy evaluations will help inform those discussions.

<u>Other Factors:</u>

- **Innovative**
  Interest in using citizen science to help fill data gaps in marine fisheries has been growing in recent years. This project will support the continuation of the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project which is helping address key research priorities on released fish.

- **Properly prepared**
  This proposal follows the guidelines under the ACCSP Funding Decision Process Document.

- **Merit**
  This project supports the continuation of the *SAFMC Release* citizen science project that addresses key research needs on released shallow water grouper and Red Snapper –

helping to characterize the size of released fish and better understand how many of those released fish survive. Data collection is done via the SciFish platform, using ACCSP standards and making the data easily accessible for assessment and management. *SAFMC Release* data were recommended for use by the SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop Panel and SEDAR 90 research recommendations include developing more opportunities (e.g., citizen science, catch cards) to collect release lengths from the recreational fleet and gathering more information on barotrauma mitigation technique usage rates – supporting the continuation and expansion of the *SAFMC Release* project. *SAFMC Release* data will be presented for consideration at the South Atlantic Gag assessment which is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2026. Additionally, this project will collect information on the effectiveness of various recruitment and retention strategies for *SAFMC Release* which could be informative for other citizen science projects along the Atlantic coast.

Appendix 1. Letters of Support

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Commissioners
Rodney Barreto
Chairman
Coral Gables

Steven Hudson
Vice Chairman
Fort Lauderdale

Preston Farrior
Tampa

Gary Lester
Oxford

Albert Maury
Coral Gables

Gary Nicklaus
Jupiter

Sonya Rood
St. Augustine

Office of the Executive Director
Roger A. Young
Executive Director

Charles "Rett" Boyd
Assistant Executive Director

George Warthen
Chief Conservation Officer

Jessica Crawford
Chief of Staff

Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Jessica McCawley
Director

850-487-0554

Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.

620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, Florida
32399-1600
Voice: 850-488-4676

Hearing/speech-impaired:
800-955-8771 (T)
800-955-8770 (V)

MyFWC.com

June 2, 2025

Julie DeFilippi Simpson
ACCSP Deputy Director
Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistic Program
1050 N. Highland ST., Ste 200A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Ms. DeFilippi Simpson,

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is supportive of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) research proposal entitled, "Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the SAFMC Release Citizen Science Project" that has been submitted to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program for FY26 funding.

This is a collaborative project in partnership with state agencies. Specifically, funding for this proposal will continue to expand recreational data collection for many South Atlantic reef fish species through the SAFMC Release citizen science application to recruit more private recreational fishermen for the SAFMC Release.

Recently, release length data from the SAFMC Release was recommended for incorporation into the SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) assessment by the Data Workshop panel, which is a huge accomplishment for this project. FWC is supportive of the continuation of this project, especially the proposal's plan to enhance SAFMC Release volunteer recruitment and retention strategies.

Once funded for FY26, FWC will assist the project through coordinated information exchange as the project is executed as well as review of materials as needed.

If you have a y questions, please feel free to contact me at Jessica.M n /Crawley@myfwc.com.

Sincerely,

Jessica McCawley

State of South Carolina
Department of Natural Resources

Thomas S. Mullikin, PhD, JD, *Director*
Blaik Keppler, *Deputy Director, Marine Resources*

July 1, 2025

Attn: Geoffrey White

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program
1050 N. Highland St., Ste 200A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. White,

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program recently issued a Request for Proposals to program partners and committees for FY26 funding. Please find this letter as confirmation that the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is in support of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) proposal entitled, "Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the SAFMC Release Citizen Science Project."

The proposal objectives, which represent the first year of a maintenance project, will build on the work currently being implemented with FY25 awarded funds. It will specifically continue and expand data collection efforts for many South Atlantic reef fishes through the SAFMC Release citizen science application. SCDNR supports these efforts to continue to encourage voluntary fisheries dependent data submissions from the recreational sector for use in fisheries management decisions.

Once funded, SCDNR will directly assist with the execution of the project through coordinated information exchange. Actions will include collaboration on ideas to gain more participants and improve retention.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at (843) 953-9313.

Sincerely,

Amy Dukes
Regional Fisheries Manager

Elizabeth Gooding
Fisheries Statistics Section Manger

Bold text indicates text that helps with the ranking process.
Yellow highlighted text indicates changes from the original submission.

JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

June 13, 2025

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to express the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries' (NCDMF) support for the proposal titled "Enhancing Recruitment and Retention for the SAFMC Release Citizen Science Project".

NCDMF is committed to our mission to ensure sustainable marine and estuarine fisheries and habitats for the benefit and health of the people of North Carolina. Our marine resources provide significant recreational and economic benefits to both residents and visitors of our state. In 2022, an estimated 20 million recreational saltwater fishing trips supported over 12,300 jobs and resulted in sales topping $1.6 billion. NCDMF is continuously seeking opportunities to enhance and refine recreational fisheries data collection to improve our management of these important marine resources.

Improving the availability and quality of recreational discard data has been identified by many agencies, councils, and organizations as a top research priority. The discard mortality experienced by many stocks has continued to increase, which has been a challenge to quantify using established data collection methodologies. NCDMF recognizes the potential of citizen science to improve discard data and has collaborated with ACCSP and SAMFC to develop the SciFish platform to encourage these efforts.

At the recent SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop, the panel recommended using SAFMC Release length data as part of the stock assessment process. The continued maintenance and fine-tuning of the SAFMC Release Citizen Science Project are essential to that goal. This proposal builds upon ongoing efforts to enhance outreach, participation, and retention of SAFMC Release. The lessons learned will be extremely beneficial to NCDMF as we launch our own outreach and education efforts in preparation of the new state mandated harvest reporting legislation, which take effect December 1, 2025.

On behalf of NCDMF, it is my pleasure to fully support the "Enhancing Recruitment and Retention for the SAFMC Release Citizen Science Project" proposal and recommend that the proposal be funded.

Sincerely,

Kathy B. Rawls

Kathy Rawls
NC Division of Marine Fisheries Director
(252) 515-5520
Kathy.Rawls@deq.nc.gov

State of North Carolina | Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street | P.O. Box 769 | Morehead City, North Carolina 28557
252-515-5500

JULIA ISOBEL BYRD

1489 Littlerock Blvd.
Charleston, SC 29412
Hometown: Asheville, NC

Work: (843)302-8439
Cell: (828)215-1414
Email: julia.byrd@safmc.net

EDUCATION: UNIVERSITY OF CHARLESTON, SC, Charleston, SC
-**Masters of Environmental Studies**, December 2004

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY, Winston-Salem, NC
-**Bachelor of Science** in **Biology**, Minor in **Environmental Studies**, May 2000

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Citizen Science Program Manager, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC)
Charleston, SC, March 2019 – present

Adjunct faculty at the College of Charleston
Charleston, SC, 2020 to present

Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) Coordinator, SAFMC
Charleston, SC, August 2012 – February 2019

Wildlife Biologist III, Office of Fisheries Management, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Charleston, SC, August 2005 – August 2012

MARMAP hourly, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Charleston, SC, April 2005 – August 2005

Intern, In-Water Sea Turtle Abundance Study, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Charleston, SC, May 2003 – August 2003 and May 2004 – September 2004

Education Coordinator, Conservation International
Washington, DC, January 2002 – July 2002

SELECT GRANT PROPOSALS FUNDED as PI or co-PI:

FY2025. Enhancing Recruitment & Retention for the *SAFMC Release* Citizen Science Project. Julia Byrd (SAFMC), Drew Cathey (NOAA Fisheries) and Lauren Dolinger Few (NOAA Fisheries). Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. $137,356.

FY2024. Expansion of the FISHstory Citizen Science Project. Julia Byrd (SAFMC) and Dr. Jie Caio (NC State University). Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. $123,068.

FY2023. Expansion of the FISHstory Citizen Science Project. Julia Byrd (SAFMC) and Dr. Jie Caio (NC State University). Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. $121,076.

FY2022. SAFIS Expansion of the SciFish Customizable Fisheries Citizen Science Data Collection Application. Julia Byrd (SAFMC) and Dr. Andrew Cathey (NC Division of Marine Fisheries). Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. $116,182.

FY2021. SAFIS Expansion of Customizable Fisheries Citizen Science Data Collection Application. Julia Byrd (SAFMC). Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. $114,792.

FY2020. SAFIS Expansion of "*SAFMC Release*" and "*NC DMF Catch U Later*" Discard Reporting Applications. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. $118,500.

FY2019. The FISHstory Project - Documenting historical catch and length estimates from historic photos in the for-hire sector using electronic data collection and imagery analysis platforms and crowdsourcing approaches. Julia Byrd

(SAFMC) and Amber VonHarten (SAFMC). NOAA-Fisheries Information Systems. $75,000.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

- Byrd, J. W.R. Collier, and A. Iberle. 2022. Designing the FISHstory project to support fisheries management. Fisheries: 44 (11): 492-498.
- Oremland, L., A. Furnish, J. Byrd, and R. Cody. 2022. How fishery managers can harness the power of the crowd: Using citizen science and non-traditional data sources in fisheries management. Fisheries: 44 (11): 459-462.
- Bonney, R., J. Byrd, J. T. Carmichael, L. Cunningham, L. Oremland, J. Shirk, and A. Von Harten. 2021. Sea Change: Using Citizen Science to Inform Fisheries Management. BioScience: 71(5): 519-530.
- Brown, S.K., M. Shivani, R. Koeneke, D. Agnew, J. Byrd, M. Cryer, C. Dichmont, D. Die, W. Michaels, J. Rive, H. Sparholt, and J. Weiberg. 2020. Patterns and practices in fisheries assessment peer review systems. Marine Policy: 117,103880.
- SEDAR. 2015. SEDAR Procedural Workshop 7: Data Best Practices. SEDAR, North Charleston, SC. 151pp. (editor).

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS:

- Byrd, J. and J. Simpson. 2024. SciFish Platform & Policies. NOAA Enterprise Data Management Workshop. (Oral presentation.)
- Byrd, J., C. Collier, and M. Withers. 2023. Supporting Fisheries with Citizen Science: The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Approach. NOAA Central Library Seminar Series. (Oral presentation).
- Byrd, J. C. Collier, and A. Iberle. 2022. FISHstory, using citizen science to describe historic catches. SAFMC Seminar Series. (Oral presentation).
- Byrd, J. A. Iberle, C. Collier, D. Cathey, J. Simpson, F. Karp, B. Spain, K. Knowlton, and M. Bucko. 2021. Development of the SciFish Application, a customizable citizen science project builder. American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. (Oral presentation).
- Byrd, J. C. Collier, and A. Iberle. 2020. The SAFMC's Citizen Science Program: Designing a program to support fisheries science and management decision making. American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting (held virtually). (Oral presentation).
- Byrd, J., J. Carmichael, and J. Neer. 2017. The Importance of Peer Review in SEDAR Stock Assessments. American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting, Tampa, FL. (Oral presentation).
- Carmichael, J., A. VonHarten, and J. Byrd. 2016. Efforts to Develop a South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Citizen Science Program. NOAA Fisheries Quantitative Ecology and Socioeconomics Training Program Webinar Series. (Webinar presentation).
- VonHarten, A. and J. Byrd. 2016. Building a Fishery Citizen Science Program in the U.S. South Atlantic to Improve Management and Policy. 4th International Marine Conservation Congress. (Oral presentation and helped facilitate focus group).

SELECTED TRAININGS:

- Management Assistance Team (MAT) Leader as Communicator Training
- Smithsonian's Communication & Facilitation Skills for Conservation Managers Course
- Technology of Participation (TOP) Facilitation Methods
- NOAA Coastal Service Center Planning and Facilitating Collaborative Meetings
- Well's National Estuarine Research Reserve Coastal Training Program Collaborative Learning Workshop
- NOAA Coastal Service Center Project Design and Evaluation Workshop
- NOAA Coastal Service Center Public Issues and Conflict Management Workshop
- University of Maryland's Communicating Science Effectively Workshop
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Basic Stock Assessment Workshop
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Maximum Likelihood Modeling Workshop

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:

- Association for Advancing Participatory Sciences
- American Fisheries Society
- SC Chapter of the American Fisheries Society
- ACCSP Operations Committee (2015-present)