



**RETURN 'EM
RIGHT**

RETURN 'EM RIGHT

Outreach and Education Update

Gulf Council Meeting - April 9, 2025
Gulf Shores, Alabama

Nick Haddad, n.haddad@ufl.edu
Sustainable Fisheries Communications Manager, Florida Sea Grant

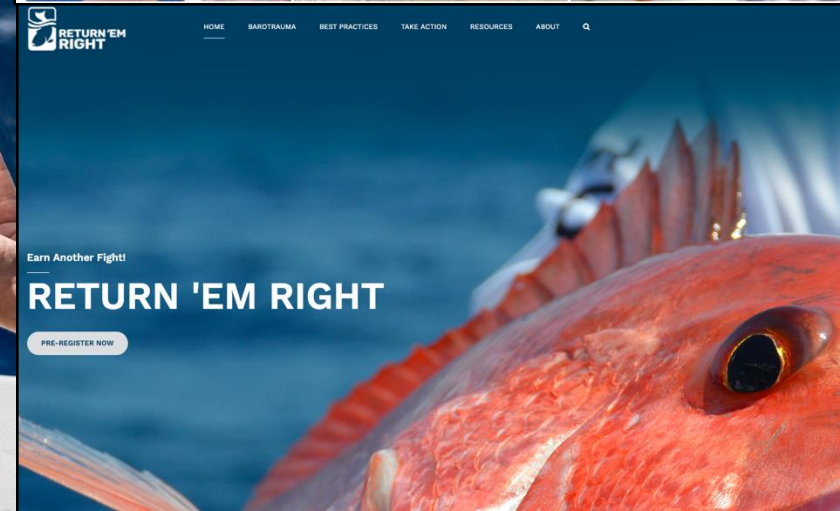
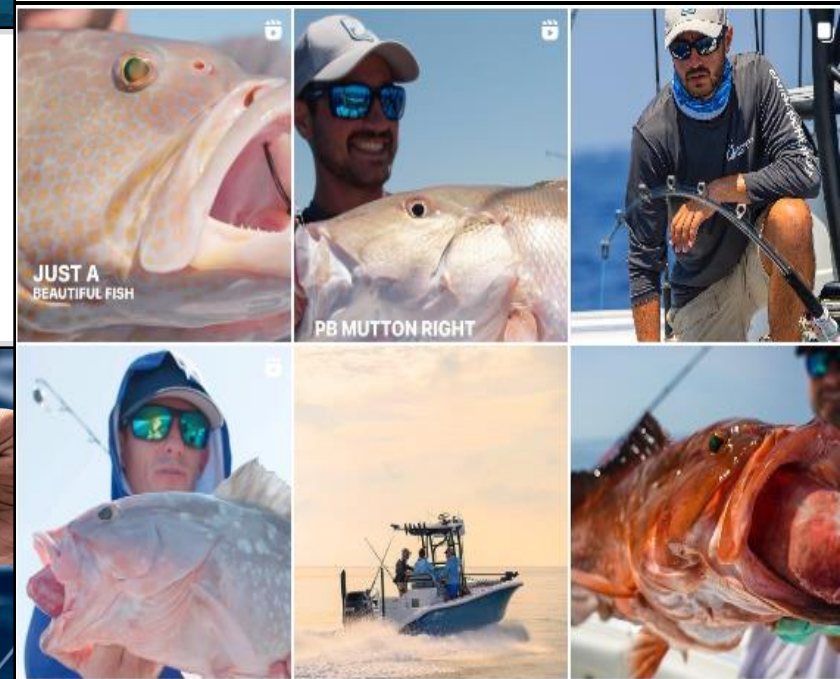
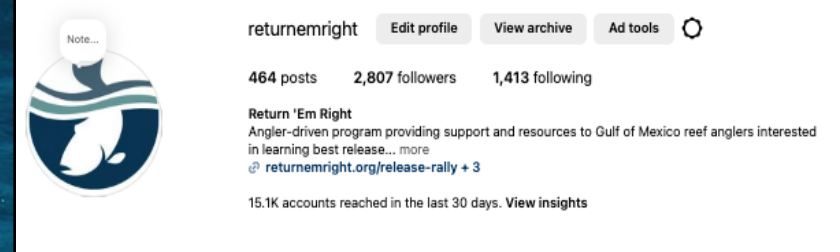
Return 'Em Right (RER)

- Duration: 7 year
- Funding: Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
- Core partners: FSG, GSMFC, NOAA RC
- Component
 - Education & outreach
 - Fish descending device distribution
 - Research & monitoring
- Goals
 - Reduce mortality in reef fish resulting from barotrauma and release
 - Improve angler experiences with release gear
 - Improve the overall health of reef fisheries



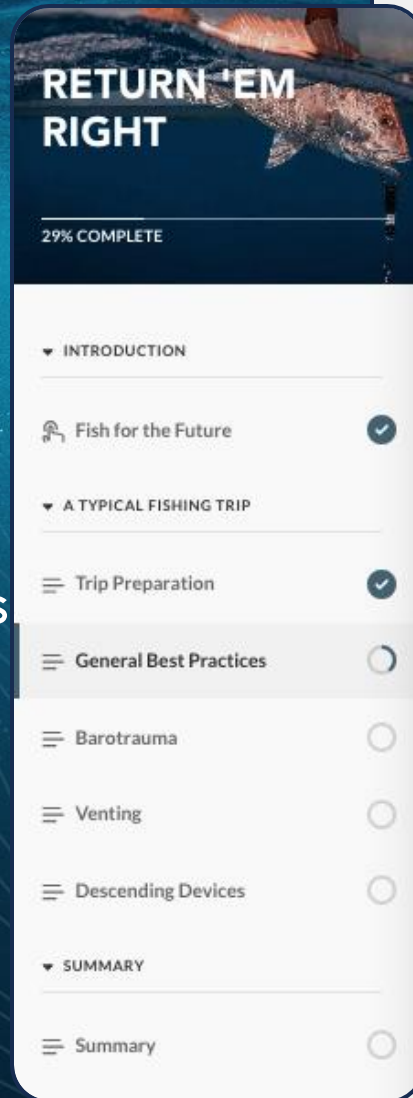
Foundation

- Branding
 - Independent of partners
 - Guided by anglers, grounded in science
- Digital media
 - Web: returnemright.org
 - Social: @ReturnEmRight
- Education module
 - Easily accessible to anglers
 - Short and concise
- Procure release gear
- Program launch – May 3, 2022



Education Module

- Software: Articulate Rise
- Three main components
 - 1) Eligibility form
 - 2) Content
 - General best release practices
 - Barotrauma
 - Venting & descending
 - 3) Gear distribution
 - Confirmation for gear
 - Shipping form



As a fish is retrieved from depth, the swim bladder will expand, often causing the stomach to be pushed out of the mouth of the fish.

Signs of Barotrauma

Recognizing when a fish is experiencing barotrauma is crucial to knowing if it needs additional help returning to depth. **Click on each information icon** below to learn about the signs of barotrauma.

Bubbling Scales

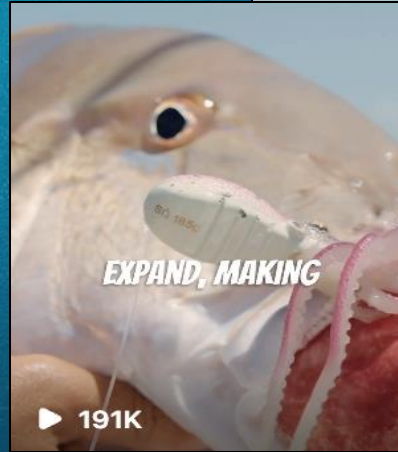


Make sure you **click each information icon** before proceeding!



Marketing & Outreach

- Develop effective messaging
- Invest in social media
- Utilize ambassadors & influencers
- Partner with industry leaders
- Produce high quality visuals
- Build a community



H E A L T H Y

R E T U R N S

The Return 'Em Right *Best Release Practices Manual* provides anglers with guidelines to help ensure the safe release of reef and bottomfish.

The health of the fishery is every angler's responsibility. Here's how you can do your part.



FISH RESPONSIBLY.
RELEASE RESPONSIBLY.
GET FREE GEAR!



Return 'Em Right

A Collective Drive to Tackle Barotrauma

STORY & PHOTOS BY NICK HADDAD

A

Push for Better Releases

Most avid offshore anglers have heard a lot of chatter about venting tools, descending devices and maybe even Return 'Em Right over the last couple of years. Return 'Em Right is a program that launched in May of 2022 to provide anglers with free training and release gear to improve survival of reef fish, such as snapper and grouper, that are suffering from barotrauma. Barotrauma is a pressure-related injury that fish experience when reeled from depth. As a fish is pulled to the surface, gasses expand internally and displace organs often leaving them bloated and unable to return to depth on their own.

Bill Dance Saltwater
Video Courtesy:
Returnemright.org

New Episode Of "Chasin' The Sun" Highlights Best Release Practices For Anglers

odes

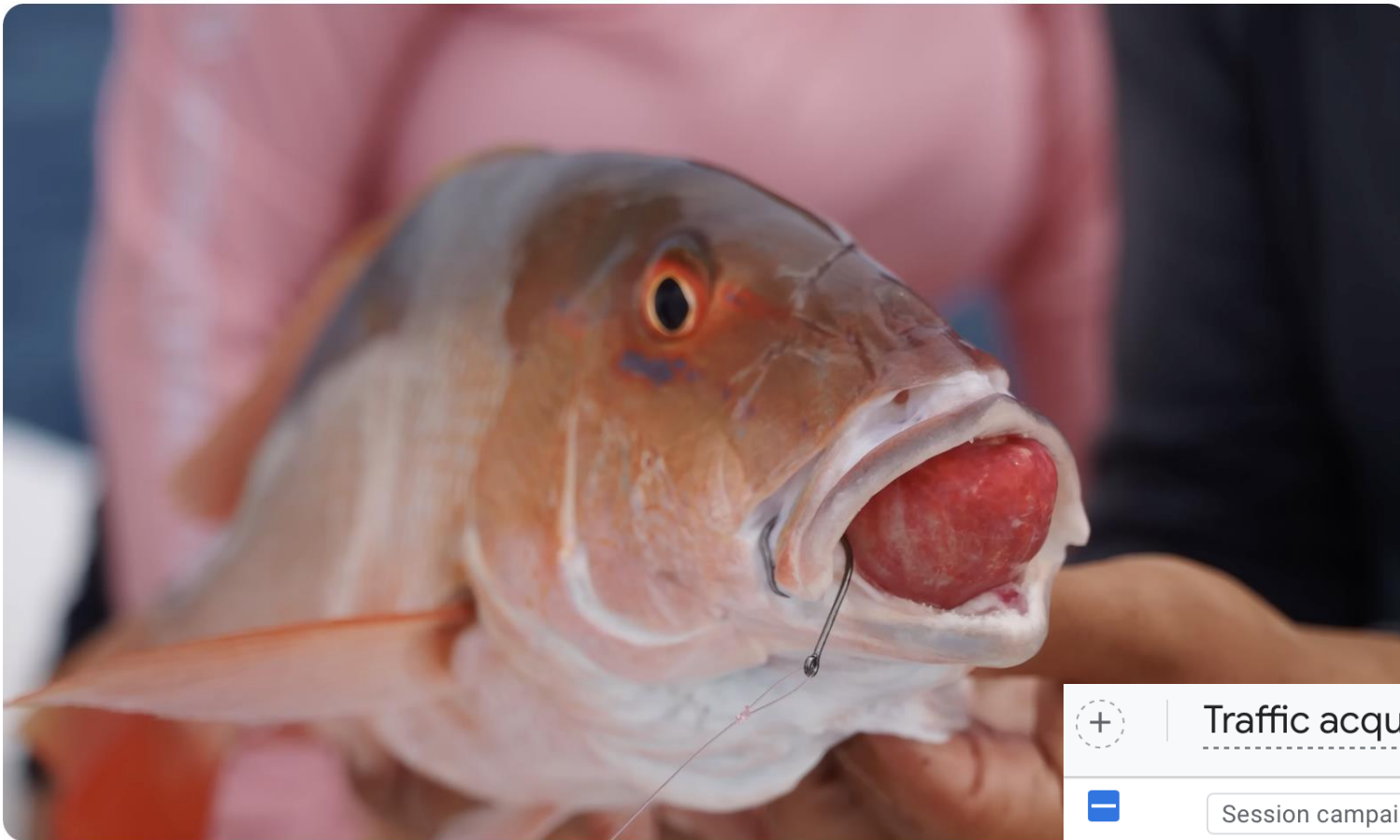
S8 E2 4/14/24

Return 'Em Right

Captains Tom Rowland and Rich Tudor are joined by scientist Nick Haddad, who educates our hosts and the fishing world on the various descending devices used to preserve stressed catch from deeper waters. Later in the Keys, the three of them get into some fun red snapper fishing off the coast of Marathon, Florida.

← Previous Episode

Next Episode →



Boat So Big they Called The Cops... Offshore Frenzy, Snapper, Mahi Catch & Cook



Life By The Bow
239K subscribers



Subscribed

10K

1.7M views 6 months ago 9 products

Help Reef Fish Survive, Get Free Gear - <https://bit.ly/GetFreeGearRER>

Source	Count
YouTube	2,036
From another angler	510
Other	185
Facebook	85
Other social media	83
TV/Radio	63
Search engine	50
Magazine/newspaper	49
Instagram	43
In-Person Presentation	41
Total	3,145

Completions: 9/8/24 -11/8/24

Traffic acquisition: Session campaign				
	Session campaign	Sessions	Engaged sessions	Engagement rate
	Total	17,567 100% of total	9,674 100% of total	55.07% Avg 0%
	1 (direct)	6,762 (38.49%)	3,600 (37.21%)	53.24%
	2 (organic)	5,533 (31.5%)	3,498 (36.16%)	63.22%
	3 LifeByBow	1,803 (10.26%)	762 (7.88%)	42.26%

https://returnemright.org/about-us/gear-signup/?utm_source=YouTube&utm_medium=Video&utm_campaign=LifeByBow&utm_id=SWS

Education Module



Training
45,391
Completions



Release Gear
Boxes
42,421
Distributed

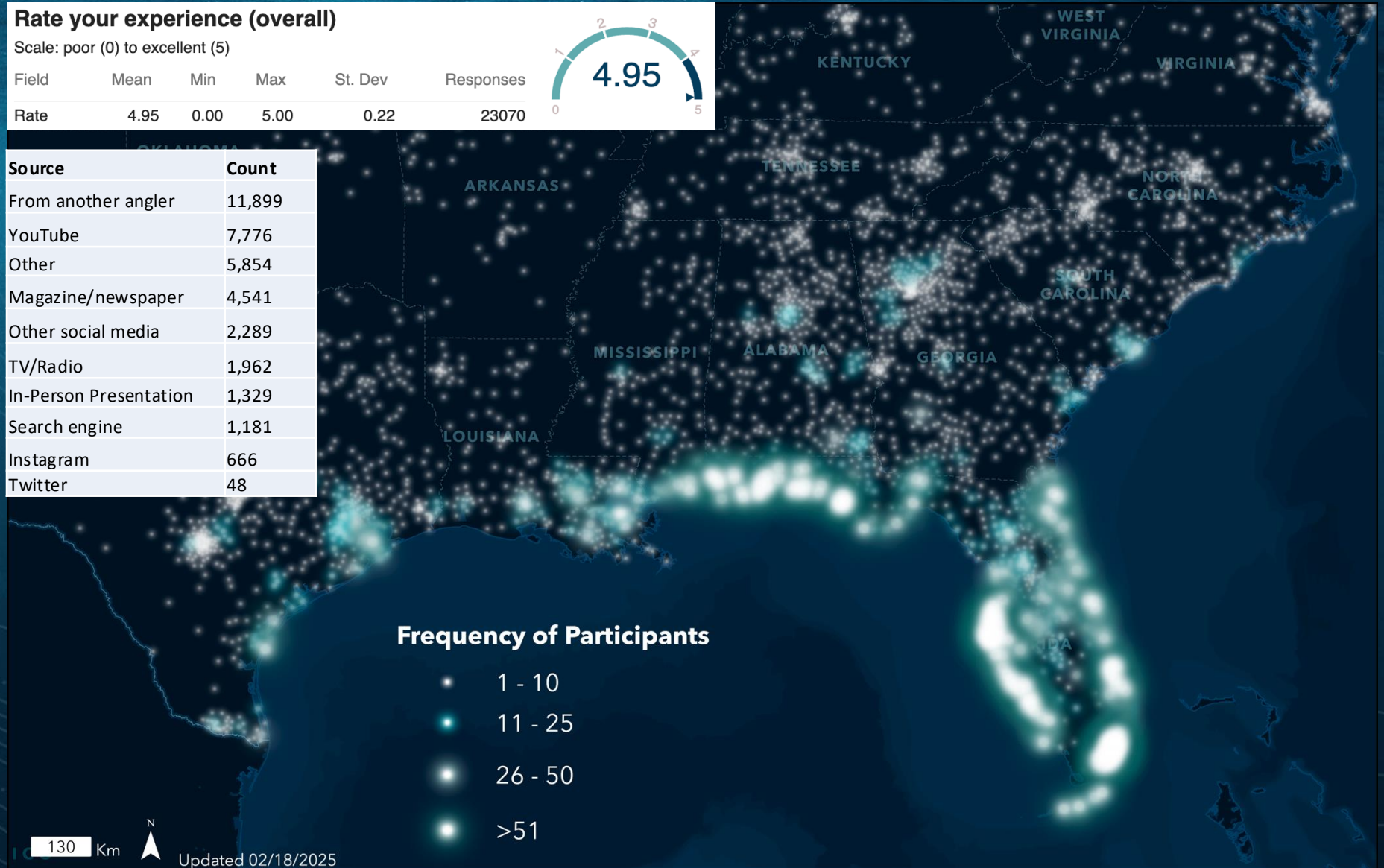
Rate your experience (overall)

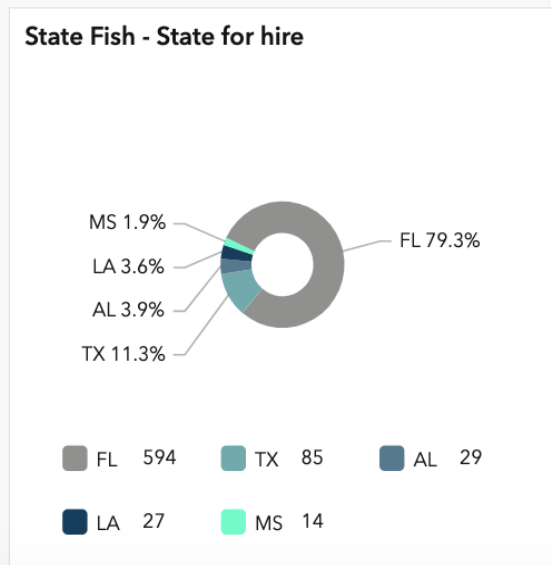
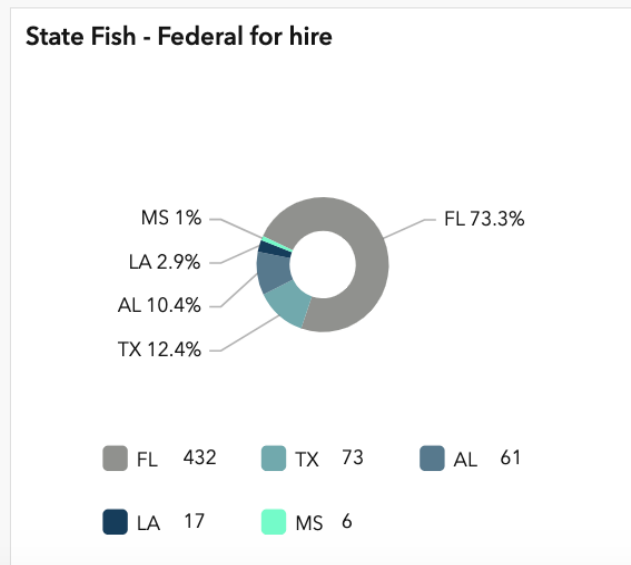
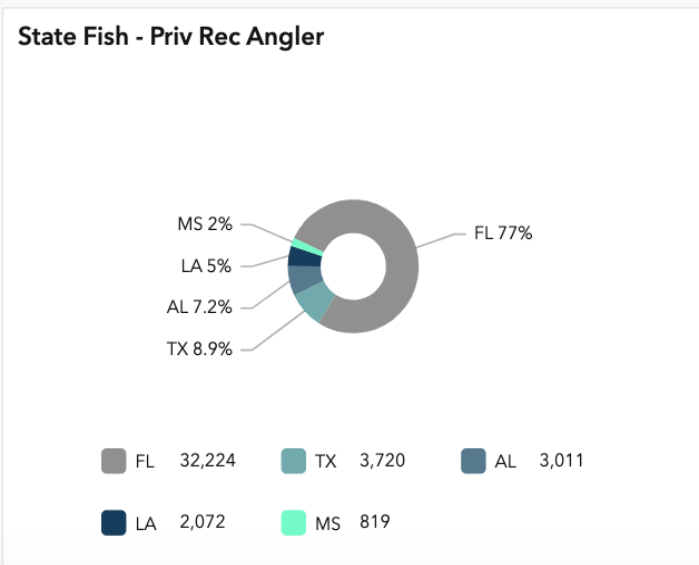
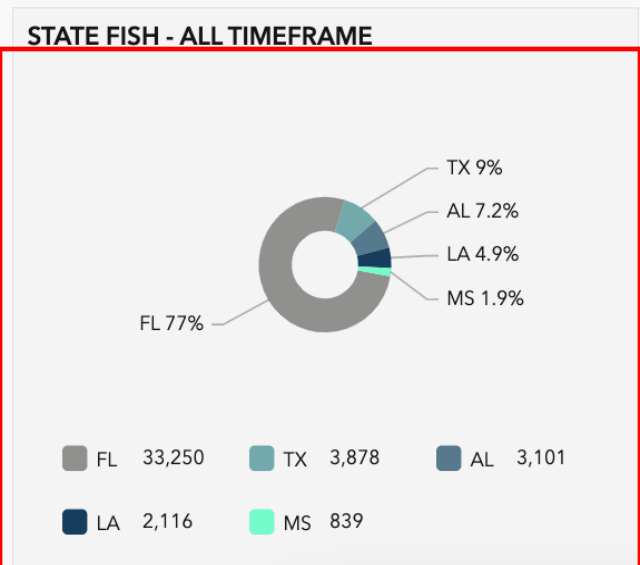
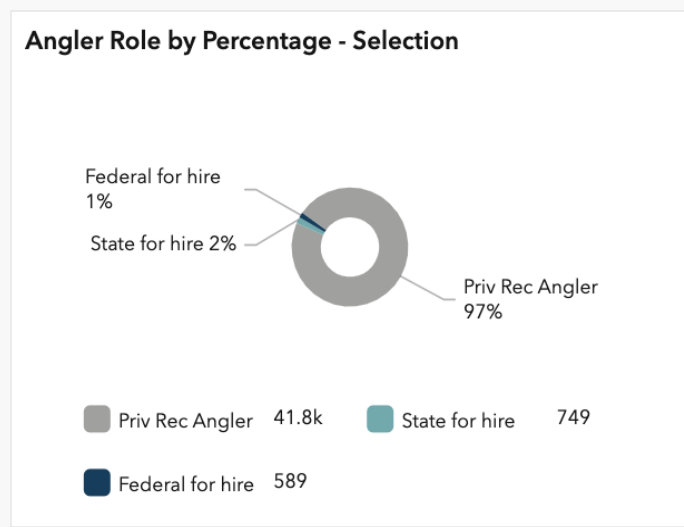
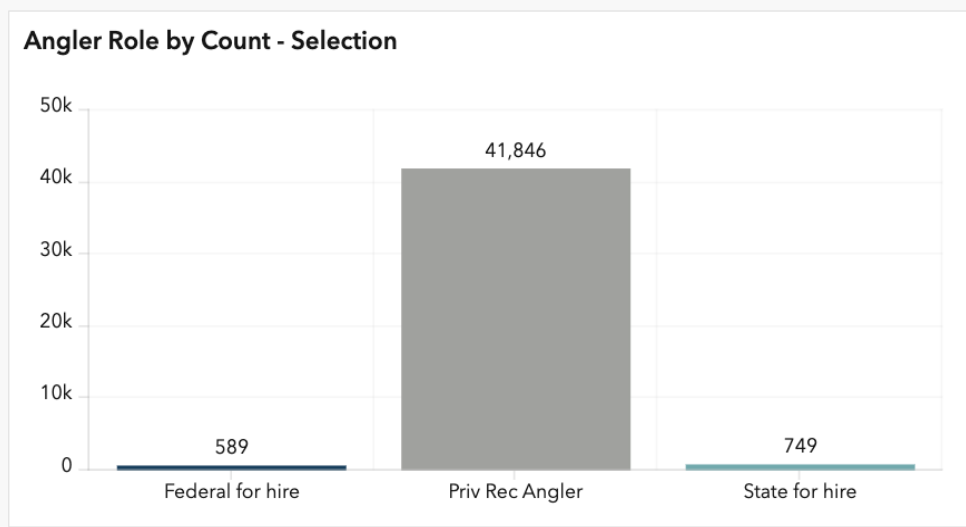
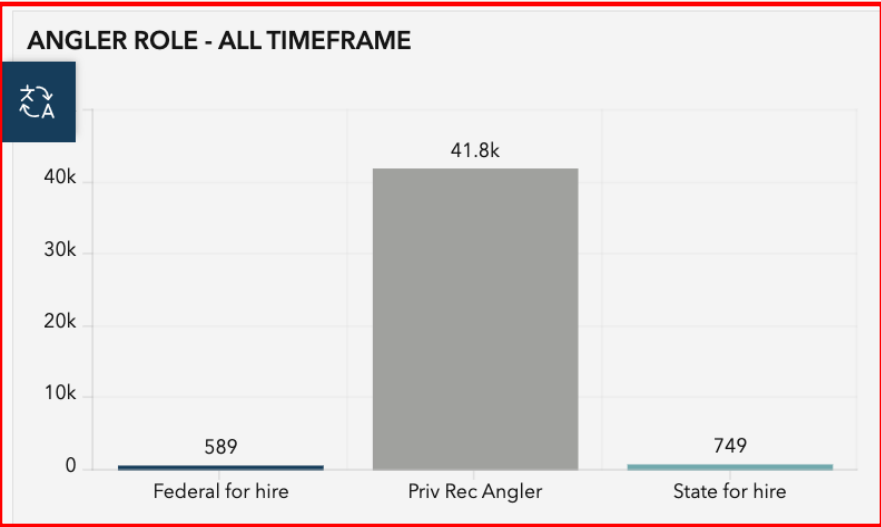
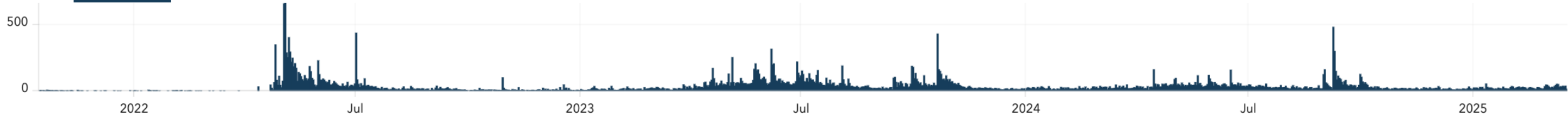
Scale: poor (0) to excellent (5)

Field	Mean	Min	Max	St. Dev	Responses
Rate	4.95	0.00	5.00	0.22	23070



Source	Count
From another angler	11,899
YouTube	7,776
Other	5,854
Magazine/newspaper	4,541
Other social media	2,289
TV/Radio	1,962
In-Person Presentation	1,329
Search engine	1,181
Instagram	666
Twitter	48







Gear Use Survey

- 93% **extremely** satisfied with package of gear (n=3,321)
- 84% prefer descending, while 12% prefer venting (n=2,418)
 - 73% SeaQualizer
 - 11% SeaYaLater
- 94% reported having no issues with the devices (n=2,784)
- 68% were likely to buy descending devices on their own, while 22% already had (n=1,510)





Gear Use Survey - Depredation

- Have you lost your catch to predators? (n=1,333)
 - 79% of respondents report losing their catch on the way up
 - 10% after venting
 - 7% after surface released
 - 11% while descending fish
- Did you lose the descending device to predators? (n=139)
 - 68% No
 - 32% Yes
 - ~3% of all respondents



- Were you losing a lot of fish to sharks on the way up? In my experience, sharks are far more likely to grab fish on the way up when they are struggling and fighting. Additionally, are you sure they were sharks? I'm surprised you wouldn't have lost the device if this was happening a couple of times.

Not sure they were sharks but each instance(2 or 3) was on the way down and the conventional reel spool started spinning 3x my drop rate. We were descending 24" red grouper so whatever was grabbing them was large.

I think you nailed it. We were in 105 ft. and I had the device set to 50. Your explanation fits perfectly.

Moving Forward

- Education
 - Education module 3.0
 - Expand access
- Marketing & outreach
 - Incorporate RER in tournaments
 - Increase community engagement opportunities
 - Build more industry partnerships

NEWS

Destin Fishing Rodeo sets kickoff, new division



RETURN 'EM RIGHT RELEASES BEST PRACTICES MANUAL

Continuing its crusade to increase survival rates for released bottomfish, Return 'Em Right has developed a Best Release Practices Manual for Reef Fish & Related Species. The manual includes detailed guidelines so anglers can make informed decisions when it comes time to send fish back down to the bottom. ¶ Although the process might seem simple, there are numerous factors to consider when deciding when and how to use a descending device or venting tool, which is required to be on the boat in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. For example: Did you know that while descending devices achieve significantly higher survival rates for red snapper, they have no significant effect for gray triggerfish?



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO VIEW THE MANUAL. YOU MIGHT JUST LEARN SOMETHING!

BRAN CHAKANYUKA (LEFT); PRAH / STOCKADORE.COM (TOP)





CORE PARTNERS





**Thank You &
Questions?**

@ReturnEmRight