

Fostering Barotrauma Mitigation Outreach Collaboration across the Southeast U.S.



Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting
December 6-7, 2022



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Barotrauma and Improving Survival after Release

- Barotrauma is an injury that can occur when fish are reeled up from depth
 - Generally, occurs in depths of 50 feet or greater
 - Severity can vary by species, water temperature, and fishing technique
- Proper use of descending devices or venting tools can improve survival



Barotrauma Mitigation Tools

- **Descending devices:** weighted devices designed to return a fish to depth
- **Venting tools:** sharpened, hollow instruments designed to release expanded gases in swim bladder



FWC's Best Fishing Practices Messaging

Goal: Support conservation of fish populations by encouraging fishers to use best fishing practices

- Proper fish handling techniques
- Minimizing handling time
- Using tools that increase survival rates



FWC Outreach Efforts

Research

- Citizen science study, angler surveys, and focus groups

Public outreach events

- In-person demonstrations and presentations

Digital and print resources

- Video library, webpages, publications, and interactive educational modules

Marketing initiatives

- Social media, influencers, and applications



Staff continually develop and evaluate innovative outreach strategies

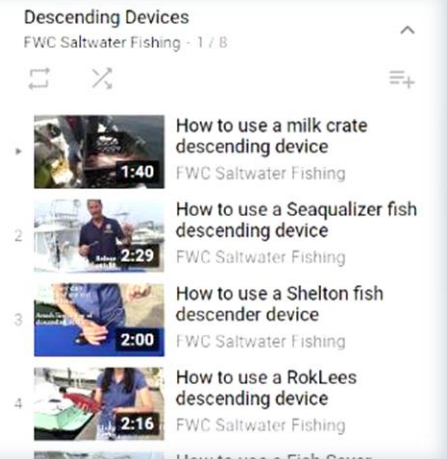
Descending Device Outreach Coordination Team

- Newly-created collaborative effort facilitated by the FWC
- Coordinates messaging and streamlines efforts across Southeast U.S.



Team Accomplishments and Current Work

- Hosted ***Donuts & Descending Devices*** event at ICAST 2022
 - Already planning improvements for ICAST 2023
- Compiling a list of outreach strategies to **improve awareness and user confidence**
 - Research
 - Public outreach events
 - Online and print resources
 - Marketing initiatives
- Meets every other month



Any Questions?



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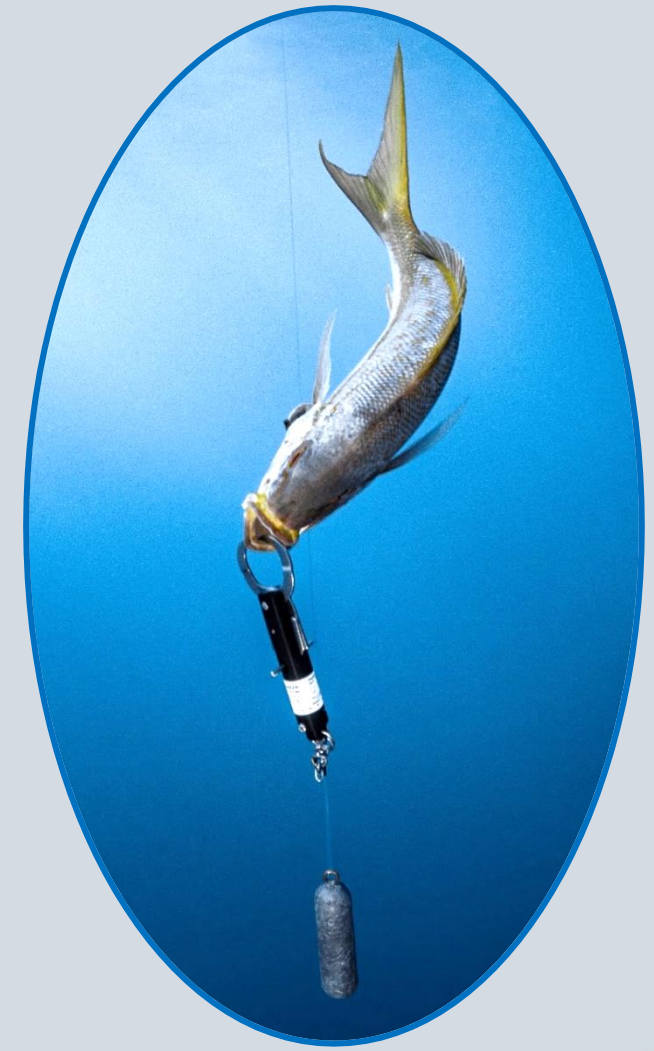


**The following slides are considered backup material
and are not anticipated to be part of the actual
presentation**



Descending Device and Venting Tool Outreach

- Understand and address barriers to use
- Fine-tune existing outreach and education efforts
 - Focus on awareness and user confidence
 - Developing instructional videos, publications, and social media content



Right photo courtesy of Return 'Em Right

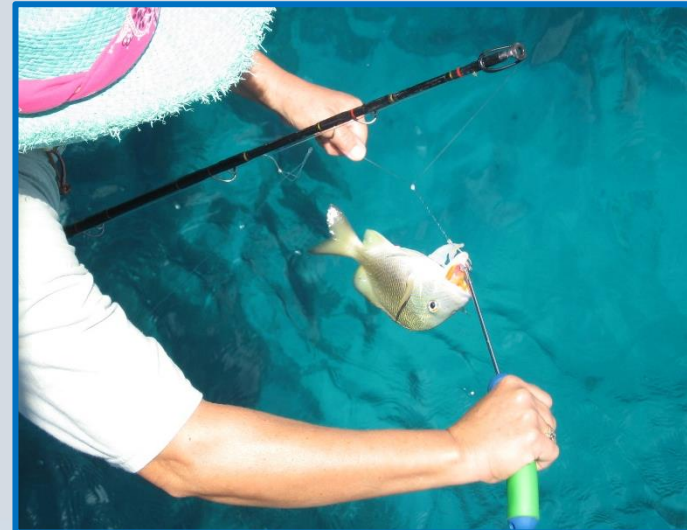
FWC's 2017 Descending Device Citizen Science Study

- **Purpose:** to understand Florida anglers' barriers to using descending devices
- Over 634 descending devices provided to private anglers and for-hire captains
- Pre and post study surveys provided insight into angler perceptions of barotrauma and descending devices
- **Results:**
 - Positive experience using devices, likely to use again
 - Some thought devices were successful at descending fish
 - Time-consuming, maybe complicated to use



Dehooking Tools

- Required onboard vessels to remove hooks in reef fish
- Removes hook while preventing re-hooking
- Wide variety of shapes and sizes, including:
 - Needle nose or blunt-nose pliers
 - Specialized designed tools
- If a hook cannot be safely removed, cut line as close to hook as possible



Florida Friendly Angler Courses

- Online courses to educate anglers and fishing guides about best fishing practices, environmental ethics, and fisheries management.
- Florida Friendly Angler
 - Recreational anglers
 - No-cost
 - 3 modules, 2 hours to complete
- Florida Friendly Fishing Guide
 - Florida fishing guides and charter captains
 - \$130 cost, 3-year certification
 - Course completion package – fishing gear, promotional items, online recognition
 - 8 modules, 4 hours to complete

