



**RETURN 'EM
RIGHT**

Return 'Em Right

Gulf States Marine
Fisheries Commission
Commission Business
Meeting

October 30, 2025



Goals & Objectives

- Reduce discard mortality and improve fish survival
- Support healthy fisheries and better angler experiences
- Angler access to training and tools
- Promote gear use and validate effectiveness



Studies

- Four collaborative studies to assess impacts of release methods on survival
- Results/Conclusions:
 - Szedlmayer – Descending devices are effective; fast handling improves survival.
 - Drymon – Depredation rare; anglers should use descending devices.
 - Patterson – Venting is safe and reduces shallow-water mortality for gag.
 - HD survey – RER is increasing awareness; target new anglers.





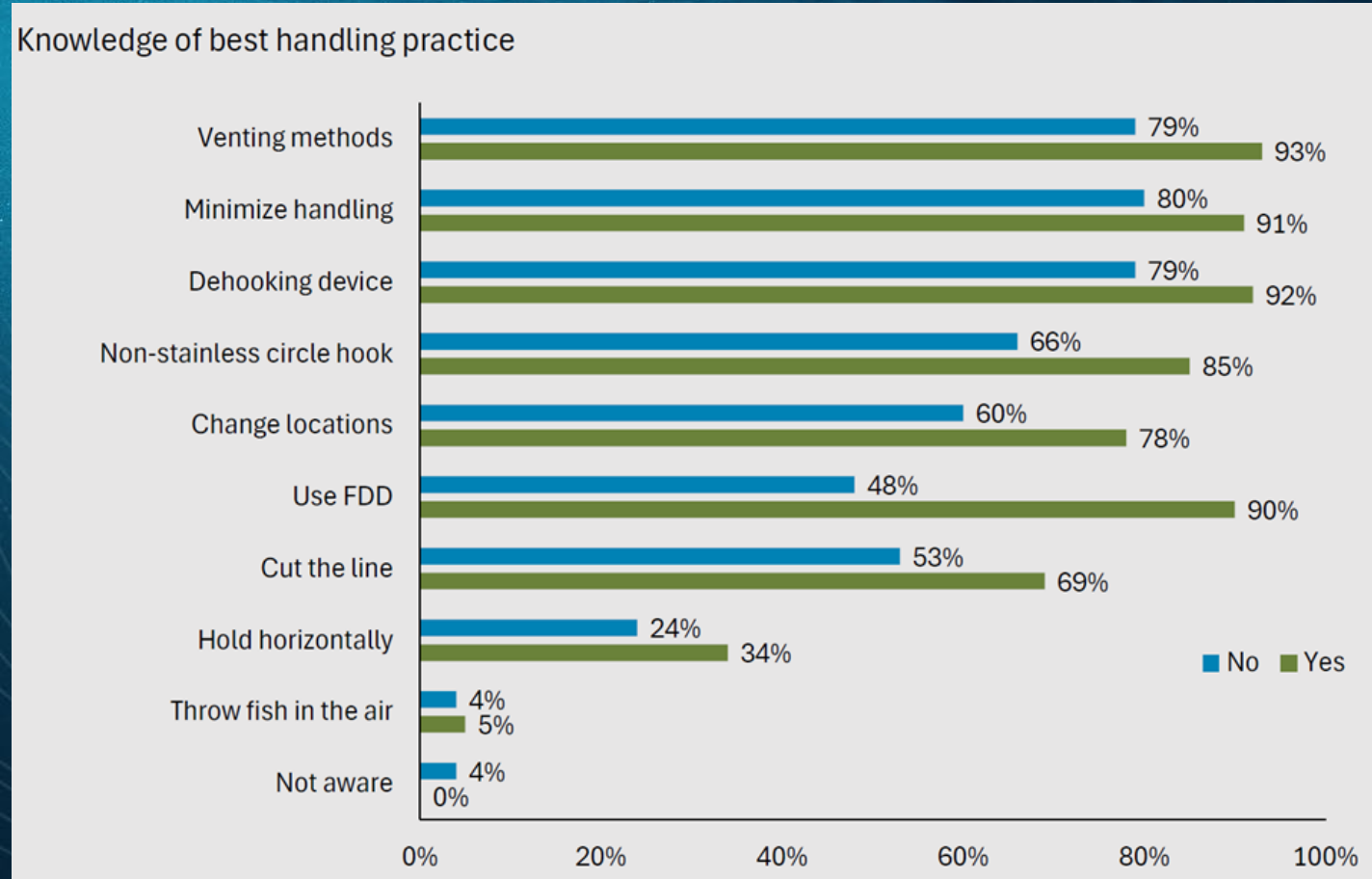
Human Dimensions Survey

- Two surveys: 2021 and 2024
- Gulf Reef Fish Anglers from TX to FL

Conclusions:

- RER is positively influencing behavior and awareness
- Continued outreach – especially targeting new anglers – is recommended

If respondents knew about RER...



Monitoring

- Gulf At-sea Observer Program
 - 4th year – FL, AL, MS
 - 1,743 trips
 - 17,000 fish tagged
- Coordination
 - Linked with TX, LA
 - Central data warehouse
- Surveys
 - >5,000 reef trips validated
 - Headboat survey in 3rd year



Outreach & Education

- FL Sea Grant — 15-min training course
- Free descending devices
- Over 46,000 anglers trained
- Partnered tournaments across Gulf

<https://training.returnemright.org/>



Next Steps

- Enhance At-sea Observer Data Warehouse
- Expand outreach and education
- Promote best release practices
- Planning for Return 'Em Right expansion



Questions?



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