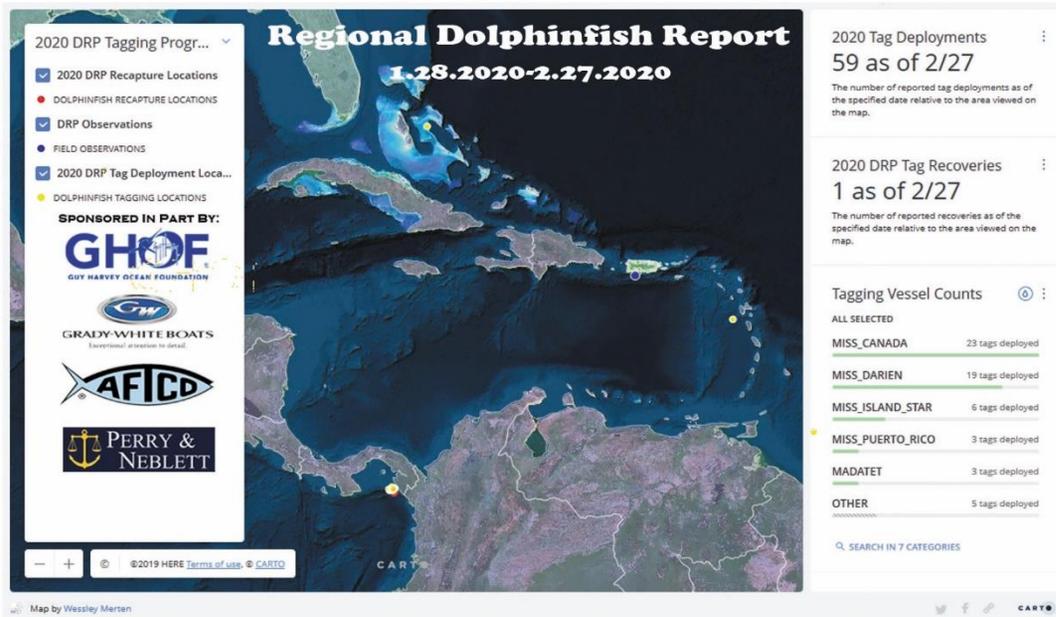


Dolphinfish Research Program™

Made possible by a grant from the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation

February 2020

Dolphinfish Research Program™



Historically, tagging activity has been low for the DRP in January and February due to lower fishing effort (and tagging effort) in Florida, which is the region with the greatest participation in the DRP. Since 2002, in January and February annually, there have been an average number of 44 tag deployments. Within the last few years, however, the DRP has expanded further throughout the Caribbean Sea and to the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean where dolphin are present year-round. This expansion has led to an uptick in winter tagging activity and fishing reports from most tropical tagging zones. In this month's edition of our newsletter we revisit the original objectives of the DRP and update those objectives based on program expansion and knowledge gaps that this program intends to fill over the next several years. One of those objectives includes increasing fall and winter tagging activity off Florida to better understand the movements of this species during winter.

Reported Tagging Progress from 1/1/2020 - 2/27/2020:

Tropic Star Lodge (Miss Canada) 23
Tropic Star Lodge (Miss Darien) 19
Tropic Star Lodge (Miss Florida) 3
Seth McCarthy (Blue Pearl) 2

Tropic Star Lodge (Miss Island Star) 6
Tropic Star Lodge (Miss Puerto Rico) 3
Julien Brossel (Madatet) 3

Year to 2/27/2020 for Reported Releases:

60 tagged & released for conservation and science

4 Recaptures to date in 2020 1 verified

0 PSAT movements

0 PSAT Deployments 0 Acoustic Tag

Reported Recaptures Since 1/27/2020

1 un-verifiable recapture reports from anglers in the ETP

The DRP's Updated Research Objectives



Formed in 2002 by the **South Carolina Department of Natural and Environmental Resources**, the **Dolphinfish Research Program (DRP)** was designed to incorporate the public into a scientific study of the life history, movements, and population dynamics of the common dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*). Over the past 18 years of the DRP, many of the research objectives set forth at the onset of the study have remained the same. Below is a list of the DRP's original research objectives set forth in 2002. These research objectives were focused on data collection within the South Atlantic Bight and along the U.S. East Coast.

- Identify spring and fall migration routes
- Document international range
- Identify recreational fishing grounds
- Define temporal and spatial occurrence
- Identify winter grounds for U.S. dolphinfish
- Collect data to define critical habitat
- Define relevance of Sargassum
- Collect time-sensitive depth and temperature data



Image 1 -Original DRP objectives as published in a program brochure by Don Hammond in 2006.

Now entering its 19th year of research, the DRP continues to work to complete these objectives along the U.S. East Coast but is now focused in working in other regions where these topics remain largely unknown. As progress towards completing these objectives is fundamental to the future direction of the DRP, in this month's edition of our newsletter, we update the primary objectives of the DRP and describe strategies to continue to engage the public in order to fill knowledge gaps and advance our understanding of this species within a regional context.

Below is a table that provides the original scientific objectives of the Dolphinfish Research Program (DRP) and specific reference documenting evidence of science-based outcomes in scientific literature published using DRP data. In addition, the table provides the status of each research objective and specific priorities by topic and region necessary to fill knowledge gaps. The last row of the table details new objectives which consists of four major themes: (1) using DRP data to examine dolphin movement and occurrence dynamics within the Florida Straits; (2) increasing participation in the Gulf of Mexico and Mid-Atlantic Bight where a lack of participation has led to a lack of knowledge of dolphin behavior in those regions; (3) focusing research on moored fish aggregating devices in the Caribbean Sea; and (4) incorporating virtually all of our research objectives to our work based out of **Tropic Star Lodge** in southern Panama funded by the **Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation**. This table is the DRP's research roadmap and guide and what is used on a daily basis to advance the program through public engagement and data collection. Ultimately, decades of research is needed in order to address and achieve these research objectives for dolphin. Our model has always

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Table 1 Original scientific objectives of the Dolphinfish Research Program (DRP) and specific reference documenting evidence of science-based outcomes in scientific literature published using DRP data. Status (Partially Complete: PC; Incomplete: IC; UNK; Unknown;) and priorities (e.g., key word(s) describing priority topic(s) or locations) are included by region. MAB: Mid-Atlantic Bight; SNE: southern New England; DR: Dominican Republic; LA: Lesser Antilles; AC: Antilles Current; SS: Sargasso Sea; GS: Gulf Stream; AP: Anegada Passage; USC: United States Caribbean Sea; mFADs: moored fish aggregating device; N/A: not applicable)

<i>Original Objectives</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Status and Priorities by Region</i>				
		U.S East Coast	Mid-Atlantic Bight	Gulf of Mexico	Caribbean Sea	Eastern PO
<i>Identify spring and fall migration routes</i>	1,2,3	IC; Fall	IC; Climate Change	UNK	IC; Cayman Islands	IC; Climate Change
<i>Document international range</i>	2,5,6	IC; Azores	UNK	UNK	IC; GOM	UNK
<i>Identify recreational fishing grounds</i>	3	IC; MAB	IC; SNE	IC	IC; DR	UNK
<i>Define temporal and spatial occurrence</i>	3	IC; MAB	UNK	UNK	IC; LA	UNK
<i>Identify winter grounds for U.S. dolphinfish</i>	2	PC; AC	UNK	UNK	PC; SS	UNK
<i>Identify routes dolphinfish use to enter U.S. waters</i>	7	PC; AC	PC; GS	UNK	PC; AP	UNK
<i>Collect data to define critical habitat</i>	4, 5, 6	PC; Gender differences	UNK	UNK	IC; Gender differences; Outside USC	UNK
<i>Define relevance of Sargassum</i>	1, 3	PC; <i>Sargassum</i> events	IC	IC	IC; <i>Sargassum</i> events	N/A
<i>Collect time-sensitive depth and temperature data</i>	4	IC; SAB & MAB	UNK	UNK	IC; Outside USC	UNK
<i>New Objectives</i>		Florida Straits	Participation	Participation	mFADs	southern Panama

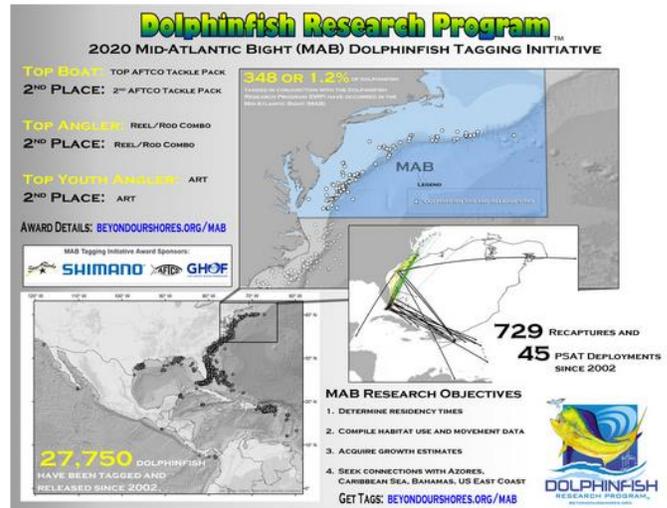
¹Merten et al. 2014a; ²Merten et al. 2014b; ³Farrell et al. 2014; ⁴Merten et al. 2014c; ⁵Merten et al. 2014d; ⁶Merten et al. 2015; ⁷Merten et al 2016;

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been to directly engage the public in producing the outcomes. Over the past two years, new tools have been used to increase participation and, ultimately, data collection in order to advance our progress toward achieving these objectives. Over the first 16 years of the program (2002-2017), when managed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (2002-2005) and by Don Hammond (2006-2017), sophisticated email marketing platforms and social media were not utilized to engage the public in knowledge of the existence of the DRP and DRP objectives. In 2017, we created a new organizational framework, improved marketing tactics, and enhanced database management techniques with the principle objective of increasing participation and data collection in order to achieve progress towards addressing the DRP's research objectives. In 2018 and 2019, the DRP had its 2nd and 3rd highest amounts of annual participation and tagging activity, which ultimately led to a surge in new results. While this marks great progress, the DRP still lacks participation in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) and the Mid-Atlantic Bight (MAB), an issue we are working to address. In the MAB, despite dolphin being the 2nd most targeted highly migratory species behind bluefin tuna, since 2002, there have only be 348 dolphin tagged and released in the region. Due to the lack of tagging data, there is virtually no quantitative information on residency patterns, horizontal and vertical movements, and connections with the eastern Atlantic, Caribbean Sea, or South Atlantic Bight. This data is necessary to address many of the research objectives outlined in the first article of this newsletter. We value greatly the dedicated effort from **Captain Chris** and **David Jobs** of the *Pair of Docs* fishing team based out of Cape May, NJ, who are largely credited with acquiring most of the baseline data for the DRP within the MAB to date. Now that the DRP is headquartered in Newport, Rhode Island, over the next several years, the DRP is focused on involving more captains and vessels involved in data collection on dolphin in this region. To incentivize this effort, this year we created an additional awards program for anglers participating in the MAB. This awards program was made

possible by **AFTCO**, **Star Rods**, **Shimano Reels**, and the **Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation**. To learn about the specific MAB awards categories and how to get involved visit beyondourshores.org/mab or click the flyer below. As an addition to our [annual year-end awards program](#), we hope this new

MAB Dolphinfish Tagging Initiative



strategy of having a specific regional awards program can fuel new participation to ultimately gather more data on dolphin in the MAB. In the GOM, we are excited to announce that, last year, Captain **Bob Felinski** and his sons won the Top Tagging Boat in the Gulf of Mexico by tagging and releasing 21 dolphin. This is the first time in several years that a boat has won the top award in the GOM. We already shipped **Captain Felinski** his Star Rod and will be shipping a nice Shimano TLD reel shortly. Congratulations **Captain Felinski!** We hope **Captain Felinski's** participation in the GOM is a sign of increased participation to come in that region.

Wherever you call homeport, we aspire to work with you to increase data collection on dolphin. In doing so, you will contribute to the largest collective public effort to advance our knowledge of dolphin on a regional basis with results applied to a host of specific research objectives. You can and will make a difference by tagging dolphin in the DRP. Request tags at dolphintagging.com/tags.

New Sponsors Webpage Published

Sponsors of the Dolphinfish Research Program (DRP) help to fulfill our research objectives with anglers around the world. To further acknowledge our gratitude for their support and to promote the services these great companies and entities provide, we have created a dedicated webpage that showcases each of our sponsors. Visit dolphintagging.com/sponsors to learn more.

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Support the DRP by Purchasing a T-shirt



Help support our dolphin research by [purchasing a program tee](#). The logo featured on the shirts was created by [Guy Harvey](#), the renowned marine artist and fisheries scientist. Please [click here](#) to order a t-shirt.

Donate to Support the DRP in 2020



The **Beyond Our Shores Foundation** is the official [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) founded to support and expand the DRP. In 2020, we are working to surpass 30,000 tagged dolphin for the program. Help

us exceed this significant milestone by supporting our tagging program. Your donation will advance the expansion of the DRP, a leader in the conservation and research of dolphin, by helping to purchase more tags to distribute to anglers, support our education programs, and improve fisheries data collection among recreational, for-hire, and small-scale commercial fishermen. [Click here](#) to donate today. [clicking here](#).

Request Your Tagging Kit for 2020

Participation in the DRP helps collect information on all of the aforementioned research objectives outlined in this newsletter.



Greater tagging activity helps booster data collection and in 2019 anglers tagged the 3rd highest amount of dolphin ever for the program. Request your kit today to help us maximize data collection in 2020. [Click here](#) to request a kit. This year we are excited to include two circle hook jigs, provided by Bird of Prey Fishing tackle, in every kit to promote the use of circle hooks while trolling, sight-casting, or bailing dolphin. To purchase a kit to help support the DRP [click here](#).

To make tax-deductible donation click image below:



To Donate by Check [click here](#), Make Checks out to:

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