Dolphinfish Research Program Newsletter
February 2026

Dolphinfish Research Program™

Made possible by a grant from the Guy Harvey Foundation

February 2026

Reported and Received Tagging Progress from 1/30/2025-2/26/2026:

Danny Parvachino (Lucky Penny) 6 **Dave Claeys (Hook n Cook) 2**

Year to 2/26/2026 for Reported Releases:
34 tagged & released for conservation and science by 3 different vessels

1 Recaptures/Movements to date in 2026
1 verified
0 Satellite tags deployed
(5 (2025) at large)

Reports are beginning to come in for good dolphin catches in the U.S. Caribbean Sea. Next week, we are set for a research expedition to St. Croix, USVIs, and activity there appears promising. Shortly after that trip we will be conducting another research expedition but to Puerto Rico. Our intent with these trips are to deploy several satellite tags on sub-adult and adult dolphinfish. This past month we received our first tag deployments from the Barbados Fisheries Division, a promising new partnership that could yield important dolphinfish data from the lower Lesser Antilles. This past month their team tagged and released 5 small fish. This adds to data collection in Barbados through the years but our top tagger was a commercial vessel Wine Down. It is important to note that despite over 500 tag deployments by that vessel no recoveries have been reported. We hope that the partnership with the Barbados Fisheries Division yields some new recoveries. Lastly, with spring only a few weeks away we are likely to start to get tagging reports from the Keys and South Florida region. Let's hope the 2026 spring, summer, and fall dolphin season yields solid abundance.

Reported Recaptures or Movement Data Acquired Since 1/30/2026

No recaptures or satellite tags reported over this time period.

Update to WCA Dolphinfish Catch and Effort Trends

In 2022, our program published a paper on the *Condition of the international fisheries, catch and effort trends, and fishery data gaps for dolphinfish (Coryphaena hippurus) from 1950 to 2018 in the Western Central Atlantic Ocean* in the journal *Marine Policy*. Here, we provide an update of most analyses in that paper with data provided by the **Food and Agricultural Organization** (**FAO**), **NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program** through to 2023 and 2025, respectively. In addition, data on catch, effort, and price per pound for dolphinfish were acquired from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission from 1984 to 2025. Key highlights from this update are included below:

- 22 nations still do not report WCA dolphinfish landings to the FAO, yet are known to catch dolphinfish;
- In the WCA, the US Atlantic recreational fishery still represents the largest reporting sector by nearly two-fold;
- Combined reported commercial and recreational landings for 2019, the most recent year with data available, was 10,286 metric tons, of which 65% was estimated to be recreational catch, a 3% increase since our last analysis in 2016;
- Six nations recorded higher average commercial landings from 2014-2018 to 2019-2023 time periods;
- Over the same periods, 14 nations recorded higher average unidentified marine fish landings or unidentified tuna landings;
- Seven nations recorded a positive recreational dolphinfish catch trend;
- However, over the same periods, US Atlantic and Gulf states MRIP total recreational landings declined 45%

Figure 1 Commercial dolphinfish landings (metric tons) for first reporting nations and the group "All Others" from 1950 to 2023. See table 1 below.

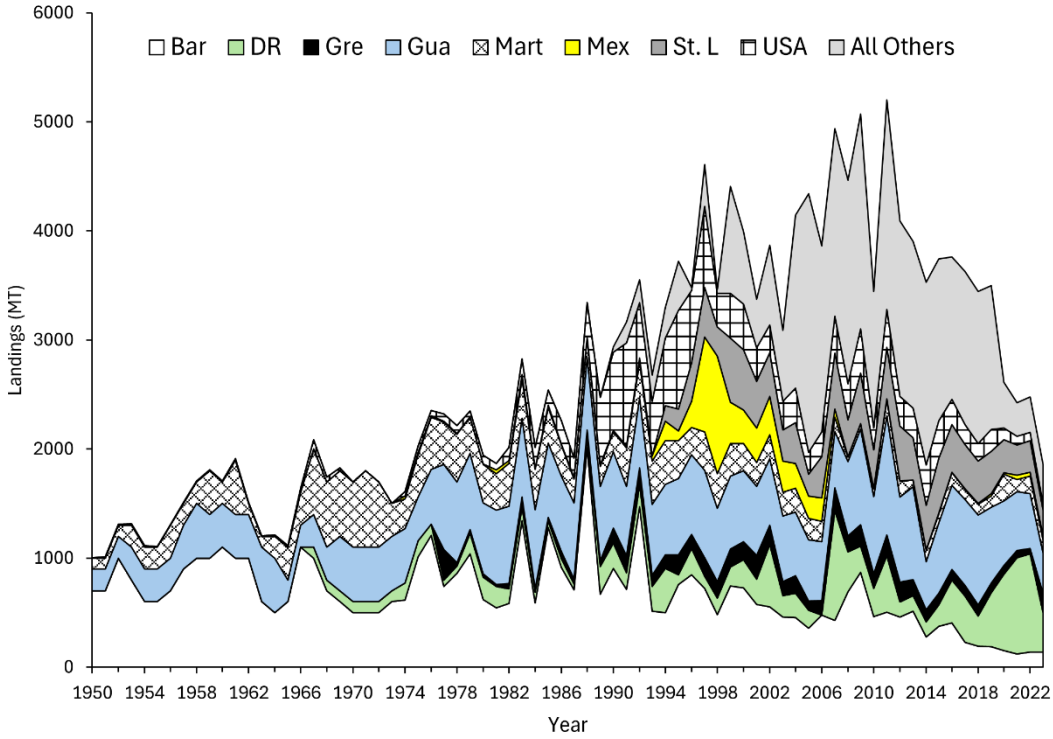

Table 1 Nation groupings used in catch and effort analysis. For effort, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) fleet codes and fleet names are provided for the first reporting nations (dating back to 1956) and all other nations reporting Task II Table 1 caption continued: effort since Mahon (1999). For dolphinfish catch provided to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), country names are included for first reporting nations, all others, and nations not reporting dolphinfish since Mahon (1999) to 2023.

Grouping	Effort		Catch
	Fleet Code	Fleet Name	
First Reporting Nations	BRA, TAI, CUB, JPN, KOR, USA, VEN	Brazil, Chinese Taipei, Cuba, Japan, Korea Republic, U.S.A., Venezuela	Barbados, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mexico, St. Lucia, U.S.A
All Others Reporting	BLZ, BLZ-ES, BLZ-GH, BLZ-JP, BLZ-TT, BLZ-UY, BRB, CAN, CHN, EU.ESP-ES-SWO, MEX, MIX.KR+PA, PAN, PHL, TTO-TT-TRINID, UK.BMU, UK.TCA-USA, URY, URY-JP, VCT, VUT	Belize, Belize (España), Belize (Ghana), Belize (Japan), Belize (Trinidad and Tobago), Belize Uruguay, Barbados, Canada, China, EU.España Target SWO, Mexico, Korea + Panama, Panama, Philippines, Trinidad, UK.Bermuda, UK.Turks and Caicos (USA), Uruguay, Uruguay (Japan), St. Vincent and Grenadines, Vanuatu	Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bermuda, B.V.I., Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, France, Nicaragua-Caribbean, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, U.S.V.I., Venezuela
Nations Not Reporting Dolphinfish			Aruba, Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Columbia, French Guiana, Guinea, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Panama-Caribbean, Korea, Spain, St. Barthelemy, St. Martin, Turks and Caicos, United Kingdom

Table 2 Average commercial landings (metric tons) for dolphinfish in the Caribbean (Zone 31 and 41)

Country	Fleet	Dolphinfish Landings			Unidentified Landings					Recreational Fleet			
		2014-18 (MT)	2019-23 (MT)	Trend	2014-18 (MT)	2019-23 (MT)	Trend UIM	Trend UIT	Trend UIP	2016 DOL TC (MT)	2019 DOL TC (MT)	% Total Or Total (MT)	Trend
Countries reporting dolphinfish landings to the FAO													
Antigua and Barbuda	RAC	29.4	23.4	-	*187; 24*	*202; 23*	+ 8%	-	n/a	0	n/r	170	n/a
Barbados	RAC	286.4	146.3	-	*230*	*109, 0*	-	S	n/a	.01 DOL	0.1 DOL	8%	+
Belize	RC	1.8	NR	-	*119*	*0*	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Bermuda	RAC	4	3.7	-	*4*	3.5	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	158	n/a
Brazil	RAC	1,333.0	327.8	-	*0*	*29400X; 311.2*	S	S	n/a	n/r	n/r	9385	n/a
British Virgin Islands	RAC	1	0.9	-	*770X*	*730; 0.8*	-	S	n/a	29 DOL	27 DOL	25%	-
Costa Rica	RAC	75.6	17.4	-	*28; 141*	*62; 93*	+ 121%	-	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Cuba	RAC	19	8.8	-	*5,583*	*0*	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	3003	n/a
Dominica	RAC	239.2	119	-	*156*	*145; 6.12*	-	S	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Dominican Republic	RAC	327.2	667.6	+104%	*1,498*	*2500; 463.8*	+ 69%	S	n/a	39 DOL	35 DOL	28%	-
Grenada	RAC	103.2	93.5	-	*34*	*34X*	=	n/a	n/a	.15 DOL	0.13 DOL	9%	-
Guadeloupe	RAC	260	539.4	+106%	*2,028*	*19*	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	297	n/a
Martinique	RAC	45	147	+227%	*227*	*1.8*	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	379	n/a
Mexico	RAC	7	30.6	+337%	*13,106*	*5977.2; 622.5;* **103.4**	-	S	S	n/r	n/r	120	n/a
Nicaragua	AC	NR	0.0	S	*203*	*225.7*	+ 11%	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Puerto Rico	RAC	38.2	50.9	+33.24%	*104; 1*	*10; 0.7*	-	-	n/a	517 DOL	n/r	n/r	n/a
St. Lucia	RAC	428	298.3	-	*425; 19*	*473.2; 6.2*	+ 11%	-	n/a	.70 DOL	0.7 DOL	9%	=
St. Kitts/Nevis	RAC	53.6	18.9	-	*44; 9*	*4.4; 0*	-	-	n/a	.28 DOL	0.27 DOL	25%	-
St. Vincent/Grenadines	RAC	57	81.7	+43.33%	*9*	*1.8; 0*	-	S	n/a	.08 DOL	0.1 DOL	9%	+
Suriname	AC	147.6	NR	n/a	*32,154*	*23,490*	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/a
Trinidad & Tobago	RC	12	5.2	-	*6,078; 369*	*6079; 367*	+ 0.01%	-	n/a	111 DOL	114 DOL	9%	+
USA	RC	176	104.2	-	*1,753; 8*	*2526; 0*	+ 44%	-	n/a	7,448 DOL	5939 DOL	5%	-
U.S.V.I	RAC	24	12.1	-	*19; 4*	*0.7; 0*	-	-	n/a	22 DOL	24 DOL	25%	+
Venezuela	RC	1,226.2	204.8	-	*1,760; 41*	*254; 0*	-	-	n/a	0	n/r	n/r	n/a
Countries not reporting dolphinfish landings to the FAO													
Aruba	RA				*48*	*52.6*	+ 10%	n/a	n/a	109 DOL	94 DOL	12%	-
Bahamas	RA				*12*	*25.7*	+ 114%	n/a	n/a	475 DOL	479 DOL	8%	+
Cayman Islands	R				*125X*	*125X*	=	n/a	n/a	.05 DOL	0.05 DOL	0.2%	=
Colombia	R				*2,761; 7*	*1248; 8221*	-	+ 117,343%	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
French Guiana	R				*52*	*15.8*	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Guinea	UNK				*0*	*0*	=	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Guatemala	R				*80; 54*	*35.3; 7.5*	-	-	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Guyana	R				*16,291; 86*	*22062; 133*	+ 35%	+	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Haiti	RA				*15,130X*	*15176*	+ 0.3%	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Honduras	RAC				*410*	*6180*	+ 1407%	n/a	n/a	21 DOL	23 DOL	31%	+
Jamaica	RAC				*11,753*	*10383; 0*	-	n/a	n/a	1 DOL	n/r	6	n/a
Japan	C				*3X*	*0; 0*	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/a
Montserrat	RAC				*32*	*29*	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Netherlands Antilles	RA				*0*	*0*	=	n/a	n/a	12 DOL	13 DOL	8%	+
Panama	R				*833*	*21; 0*	-	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/a
Korea	C				*0*	*0; 0*	=	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/a
Spain	RAC				*6*	*13.7; 1.5*	+128%	S	n/a	n/a	n/r	n/r	n/a
St. Barthélemy	R				*100X*	*100X*	=	n/a	n/a	6 DOL	n/r	n/r	n/a
St. Martin	R				*90X*	*90X*	=	n/a	n/a	21 DOL	20 DOL	20%	-
Turks and Caicos	R				*30X*	*30X*	=	n/a	n/a	18 DOL	18 DOL	10%	=

Table 2 caption continued: between two time periods for countries reporting dolphinfish to the FAO. Unidentified commercial landings of fishes that could include dolphinfish presented in three groups: unidentified marine fish (# italics), unidentified tuna-like fishes (# underlined), and unidentified pelagic fish (# bolded). The trend for each category is presented as follows: trend began (S), decreased (-), increased (+), or stayed the same (=). A X for unidentified landings indicated the same value was reported over the period. For recreational fleets, 2016 and 2019 dolphinfish specific landings and percent dolphinfish of total recreational catch or total recreational catch is provided by the Sea Around Us or Marine Recreational Information Program (United States and Puerto Rico. This table was modified following Merten et al. 2022. Fleet letters: R = recreational; A = artisanal; C = commercial. UIM = unidentified marine fish; UIT = unidentified tuna-like fish; UIP = unidentified pelagic fish; n/a = not applicable; n/r = not reporting. DOL = dolphinfish species landings. Yellow highlighted cells show positive trends for dolphinfish, UIM, and UIT landings. The superscript values are the percent increase between the time periods.

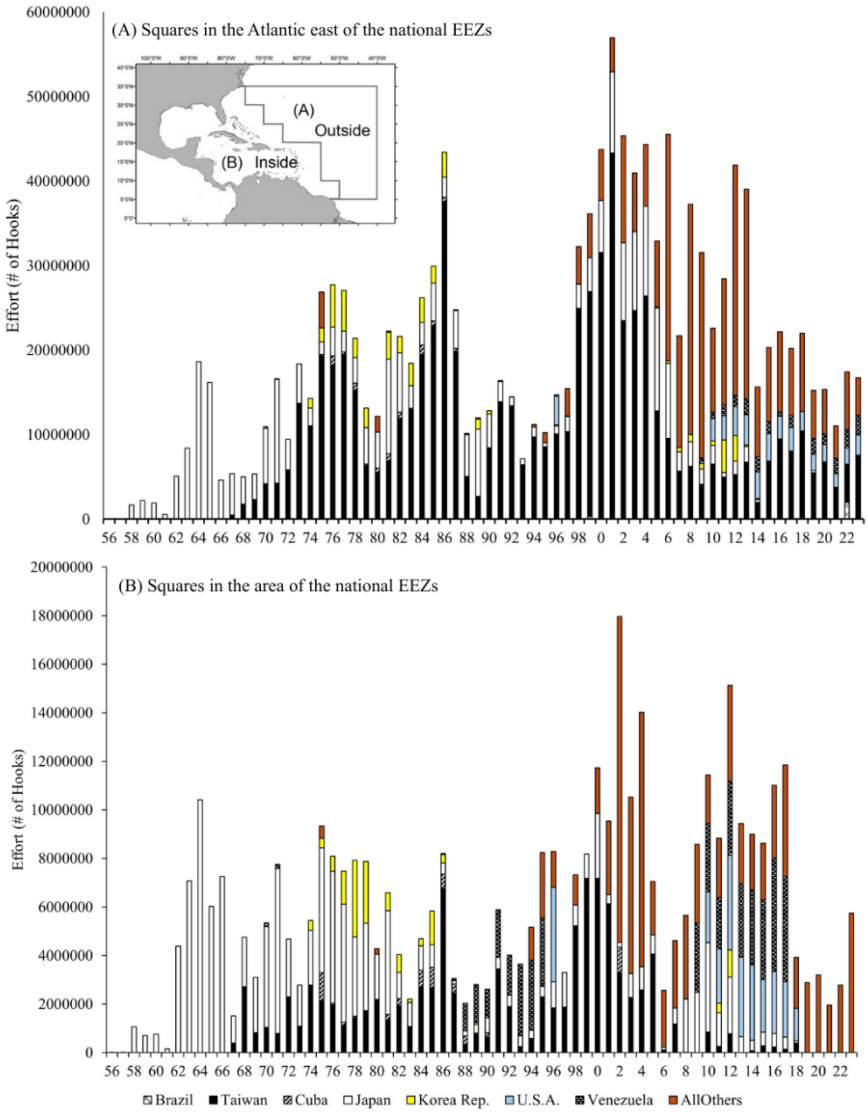

Figure 2 Pelagic longline effort (number of hooks) by first reporting nations and the group “All Others” for areas (A) outside and (B) inside jurisdictions from 1956 to 2023.

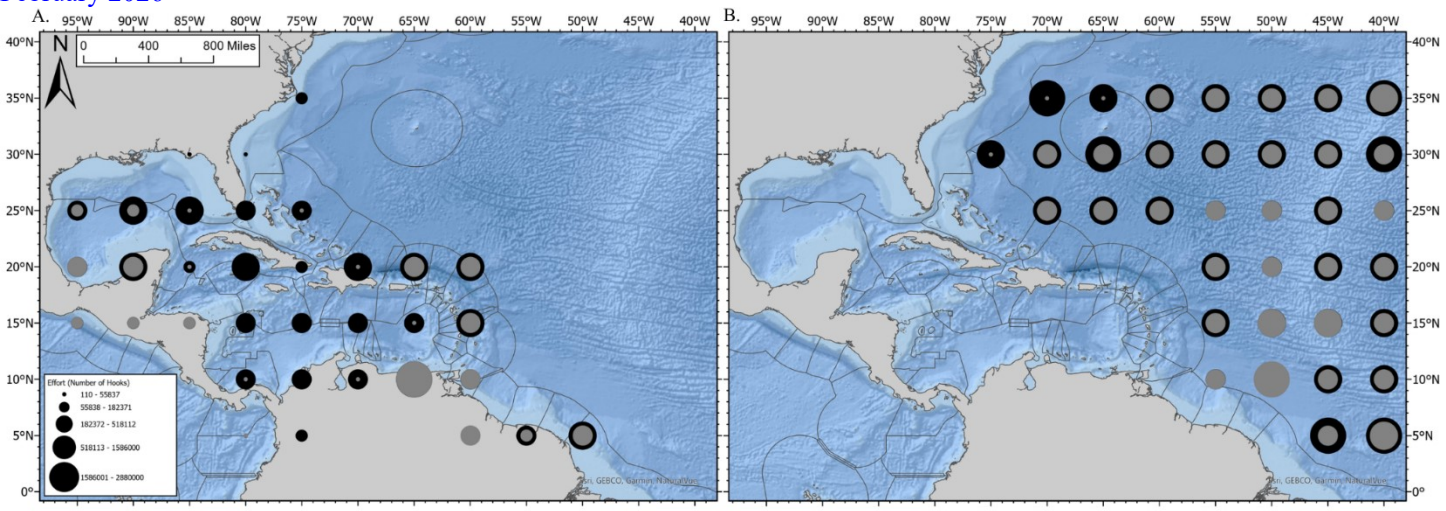

Figure 3 Pelagic longline effort (number of hooks set) by first reporting nations (black circles) and "All Others" (gray circles) grouped in 5 x 5 degree spatial squares for areas inside national EEZs (A) and outside of national EEZs (B) from 1950 to 2023.

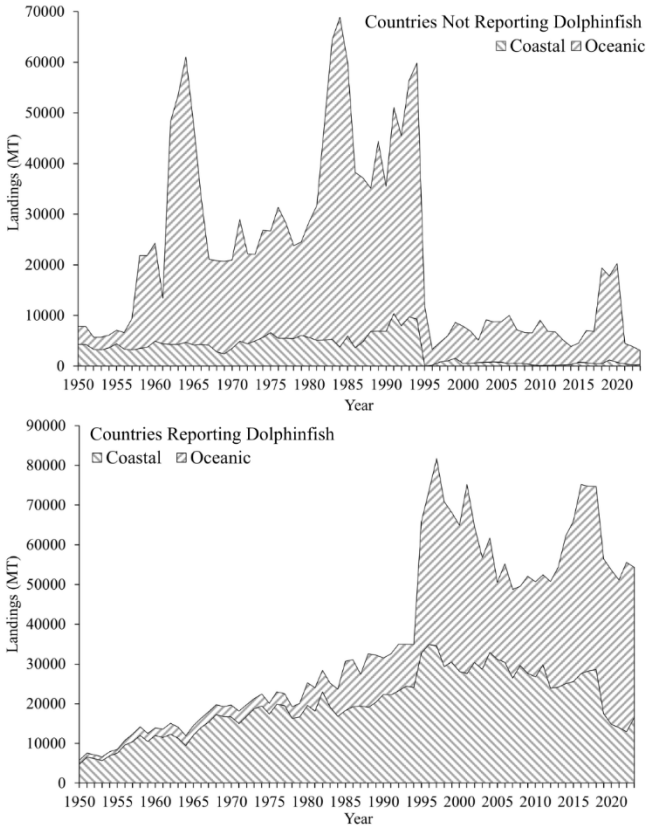

Figure 4 Coastal and oceanic species landings (metric tons) for countries not reporting dolphinfish (upper pane) and countries reporting dolphinfish (bottom pane) from 1950 to 2023.

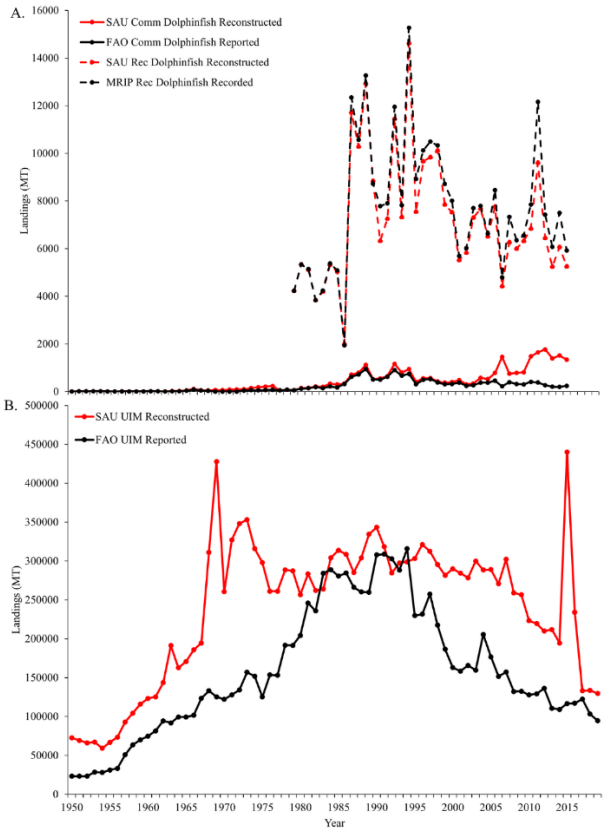

Figure 5 Figure 5 Comparisons from 1950 to 2019 for (A) United States FAO commercial dolphinfish landings (metric tons) against the Sea Around Us (SAU) reconstructed dolphinfish landings and the United States

Recreations Information Program (MRIP) landings against SAU reconstructed recreational dolphinfish landings; (B) reported FAO un-identified marine fish (UIM) against SAU UIM reconstructed landings for the Western Central Atlantic Ocean.

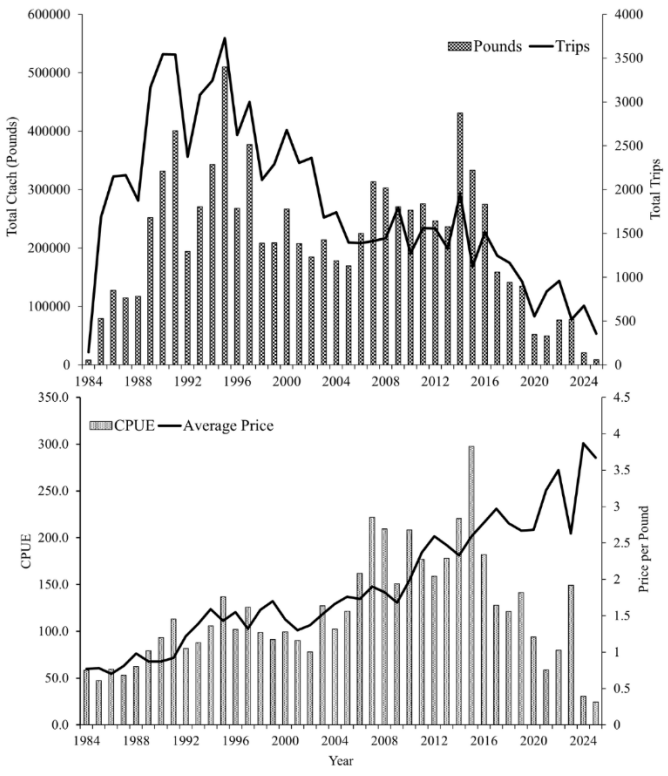

Figure 6 Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission commercial dolphinfish catch (pounds) compared to total commercial trips per year on Florida's east coast (upper pane) and commercial catch per unit effort (CPUE) for commercial dolphinfish compared to average price per pound of dolphinfish on the east coast of Florida (Lower panel).

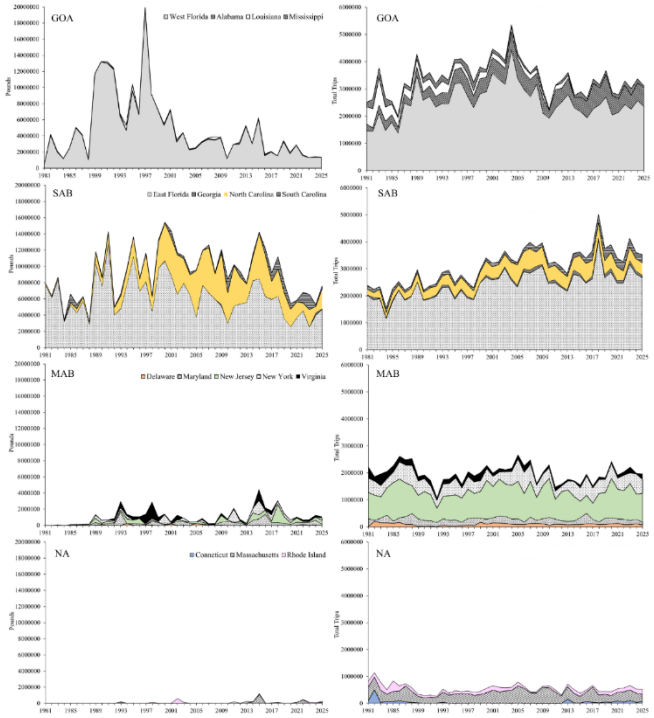

Figure 8 Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) dolphinfish total harvest (in pounds; left) and effort (total recreational trips within federal waters; right) for the Gulf of America (GOA), South Atlantic Bight (SAB), Mid-Atlantic Bight (MAB),

Uncle B's Outdoors Fundraiser for the DRP

This past month, Uncle B's Outdoors, led by Mr. Bryant Stokes, a long-time participant and current board member of the Beyond Our Shores Foundation Dolphinfish Research Program, held a Pheasant Tower shoot at the Chigger Grove Quail Preserve in Andrews, South Carolina, to help raise funds for our tagging program. Mr. Stokes reported that the fundraiser was a big success for the morning and afternoon shoots with 15 blinds occupied by 6 shooters each. Total event attendance was 250 people. An enormous thanks goes out to **Uncle B's Outdoors** and the **Chigger Grove Quail Preserve** for their support of our tagging program.

Southerly Dolphin Movements off Florida

This past month, our program received a recapture report for a dolphinfish tagged and released on January 20th, 2026, by Southern Run off West Palm Beach, Florida. The small 16" fish was recaptured three days later 85 miles to the south off Elliot Key, FL, by angler Bill Conover. This event is our 10th southerly recapture recorded for our program during fall and winter months off East Florida, a movement pattern that comprises 12% of our total fall and winter recaptures (n=78). In this month's newsletter, we provide a detailed update on southerly movements recorded during fall and winter as well as southerly or lingering movements documented during spring and summer. Click here to learn more.

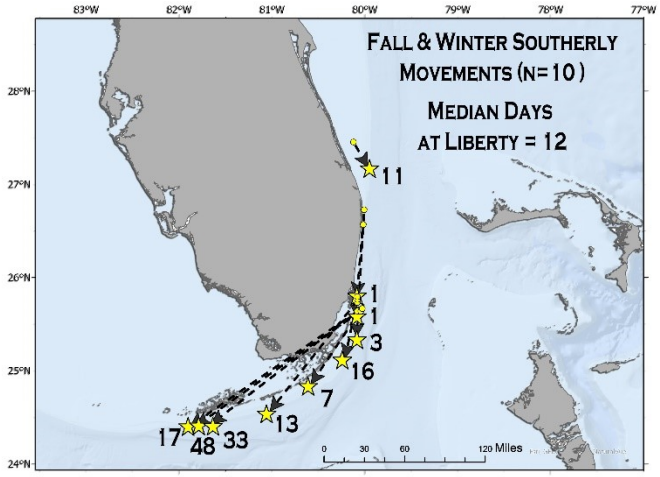

Figure 9 - Fall and winter southerly southerly dolphinfish movements observed through the Dolphinfish Research Program (DRP) off East Florida from 2002 through January 2026. The range of days at liberty is from one to 48 days. Days at liberty are displayed for all movements.

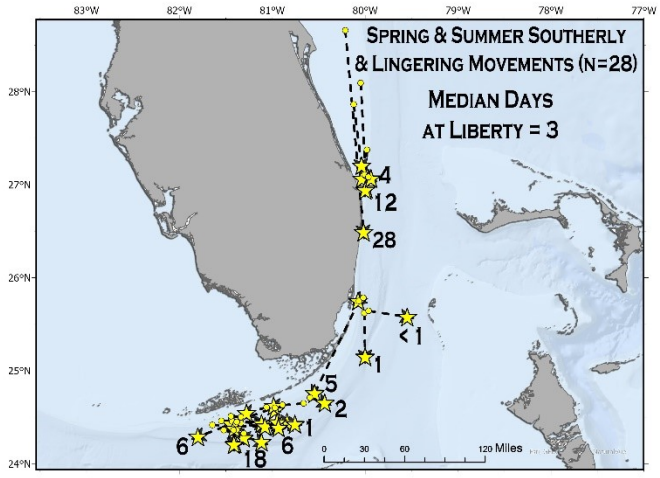

Figure 10 - Spring and summer southerly or lingering dolphinfish movements observed through the Dolphinfish Research Program (DRP) off East Florida

from 2002 through 2025. The range of days at liberty is from less than a day to 28 days. Days at liberty are display for only 11 movements.

Help Fund Our 2026 Tagging Effort

A special thanks to everyone who has contributed to our tagging program since the beginning of our 2025/2026 fundraising campaign. With your support, we were able to start 2026 strong. Our goal is to distribute 400 kits and 4,000 tags in 2026. While we have an operational budget to begin the year, we still need support to help us fund our online tagging maps (click here), acquire additional satellite tags to deploy on adult dolphinfish and wahoo in 2026, support overhead and staff costs, and increase our tagging kit and education supplies to meet our growing demand for tagging kits. Our tagging program is at the forefront of educating anglers, advancing discussions and actions surrounding conservation of the species, and gathering additional data to help inform data-driven decision making at the state, federal, and international levels. Help the **DRP** expand in 2026. Click the icons below to shop or donate to support our program.

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