

**CHANGING RECREATIONAL  
FISHING PRACTICES THROUGH  
OUTREACH TO DECREASE POST-  
RELEASE MORTALITY OF SOUTH  
ATLANTIC SNAPPER-GROUPER  
COMPLEX SPECIES**

# Project Description

Conduct angler education outreach throughout the South Atlantic via a developed online tutorial and a number of workshop presentations in each of the four South Atlantic States. 500 SeaQualizer descending devices will be awarded to anglers to incentivize the trainings.

Outreach will focus on increasing the number of anglers who recognize the value of conservation practices and properly use descending devices to release bycatch of snapper-grouper complex species back to decompression depth thereby effectively reducing bycatch mortality.

# Project Accomplishments Summary

- ◆ Developed partnerships with SAFMC and SE State DNRs
- ◆ Developed an online tutorial working with an Instructional Designer and partners (SCDNR and SAFMC)
- ◆ Converted tutorial after alpha and beta testing to a Powerpoint presentation for traveling workshops with input from SAFMC and our three contracted instructors
- ◆ Conducted 13 workshops – 4 each in Florida and North Carolina, 3 in South Carolina and 2 in Georgia
- ◆ Awarded 500 SeaQualizer descending devices to incentivize participation in our training and for future device use
- ◆ Received 621 signed pledges from tutorial takers and workshop attendees to follow learned Best Fishing Practices
- ◆ 621 anglers are now familiar with barotrauma, best fishing practices and bycatch mortality reduction and are passing on knowledge to other anglers

# ADVERTISING THE TUTORIAL



**BEST FISHING PRACTICES TUTORIAL**

**LINK**  
**[https://safmc.net/bestpracticestutorial/story\\_html5.html](https://safmc.net/bestpracticestutorial/story_html5.html)**

Photo by Adrian Gray

Thanks to a NOAA grant, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation and the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council have partnered to develop a short tutorial for saltwater anglers to help reduce bycatch mortality in snapper/grouper complex species and thereby enhance fisheries stocks for more fishing opportunities.

The first 350 anglers completing the tutorial and agreeing to utilize best fishing practices will receive a free SeaQualizer descending device, a \$50+ value.

Posted on websites and printed and placed in tackle shops

# The Pledge

I fish in the South Atlantic and will employ all Best Fishing Practices learned during this training including rapid return to depth with a descending device for fish experiencing barotrauma. I am aware that by doing so I am helping decrease released fish mortality and increase future fishing opportunities. I will also utilize the South Atlantic fishery Management Council's MyFishCount App to report the number of fish I successfully descend.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

ALSO ASKED UNDER THE PLEDGE FORM SIGNATURE:

Email address?

Would you like to receive a free SeaQualizer descending device?

Would you be agreeable to be contacted by email in late summer to respond to a short survey about use of the Best Fishing Practices learned at this workshop?

# Survey for Best Fishing Practices Outreach

Thank you for participating in our online tutorial or presentation/workshop and agreeing to take a short online survey. We and our partners at the South Atlantic Marine Fisheries Management Council appreciate your efforts in helping to increase our fish stocks by learning about and following best management fishing practices.

This survey will greatly inform future follow-ups to our educational efforts to improve fishing stocks for recreational anglers.

Total of 23 questions covering:

- \* training effectiveness
- \* change of behavior
- \* ease of use of descending device

**Was of great utility in determining accomplishment of our goals!**



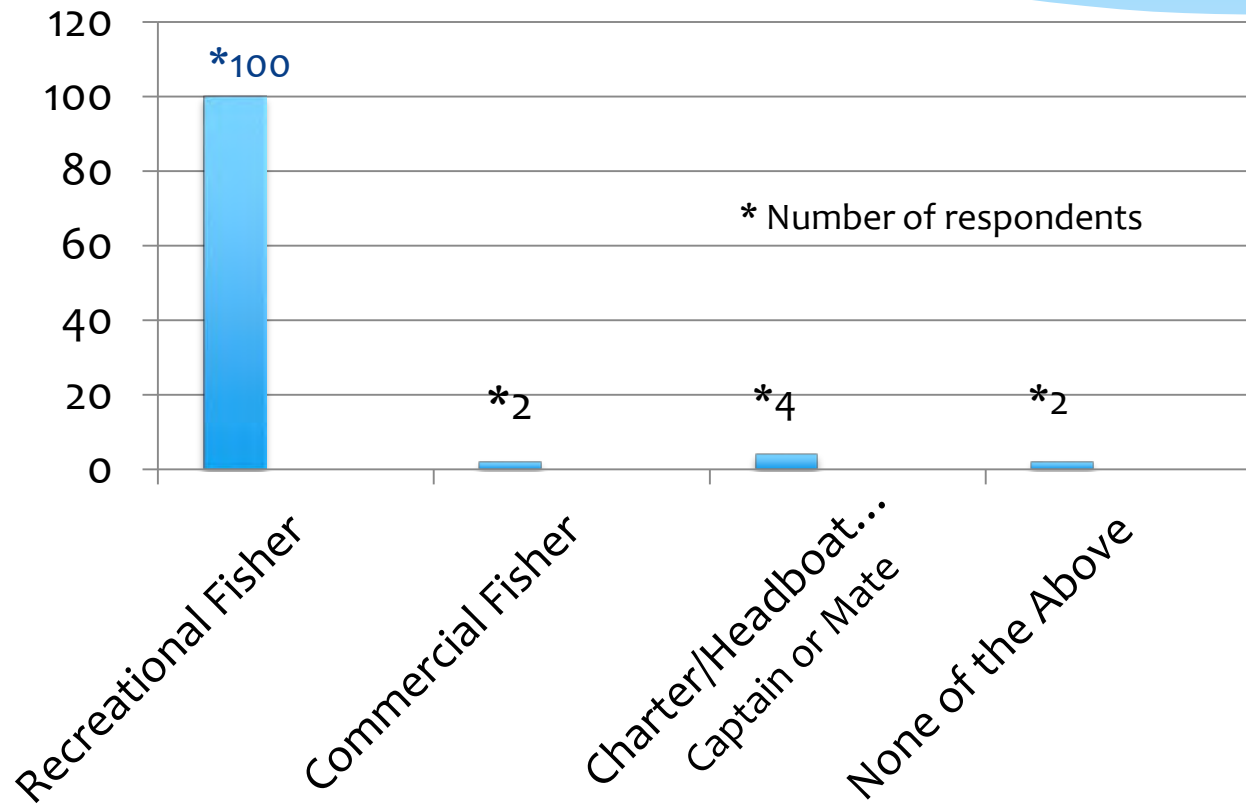
# Post Project Survey Results

## Best Fishing Practices

FOR RED SNAPPER AND OTHER REEF FISH

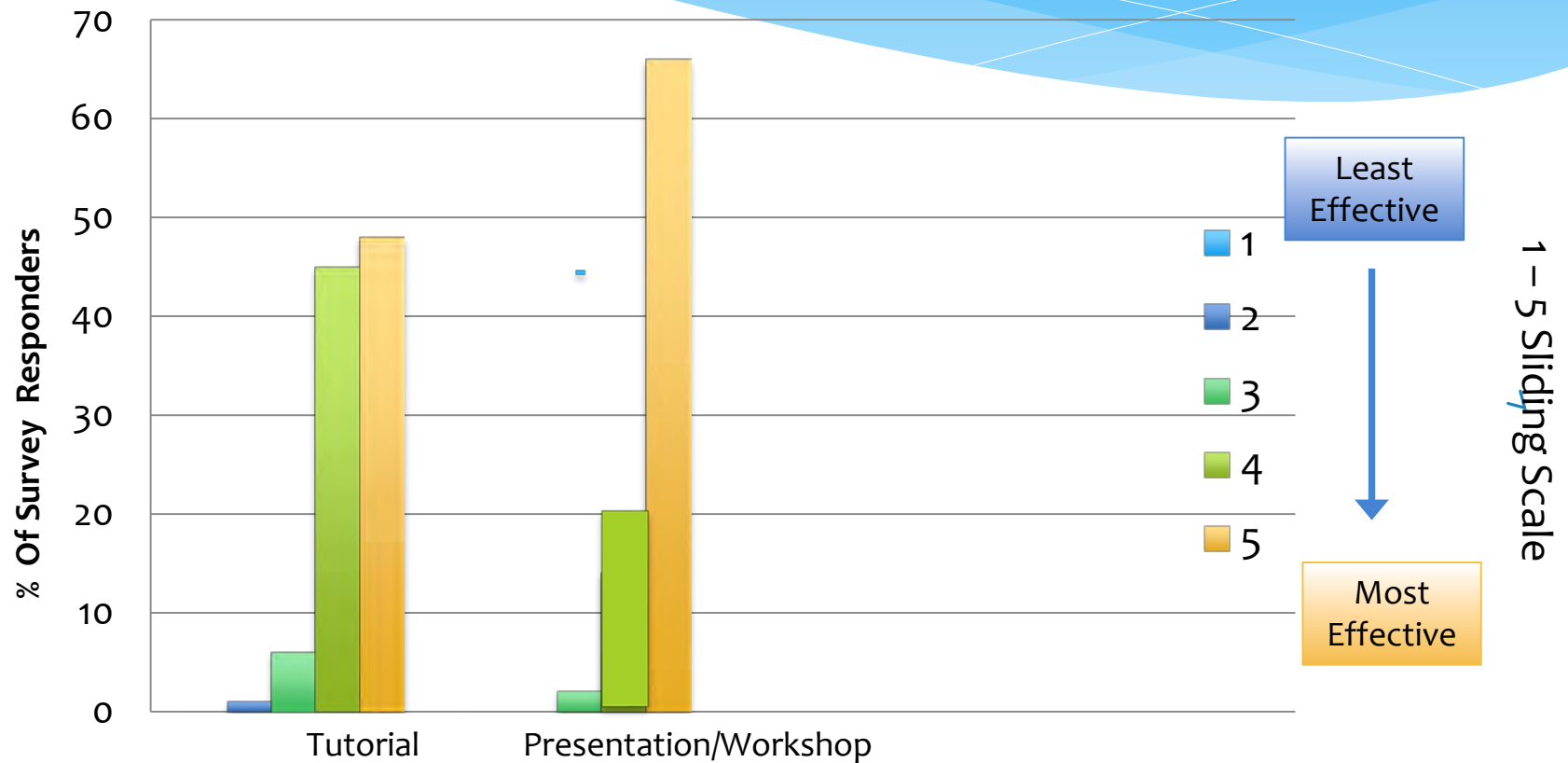


# Reaching Our Target Audience

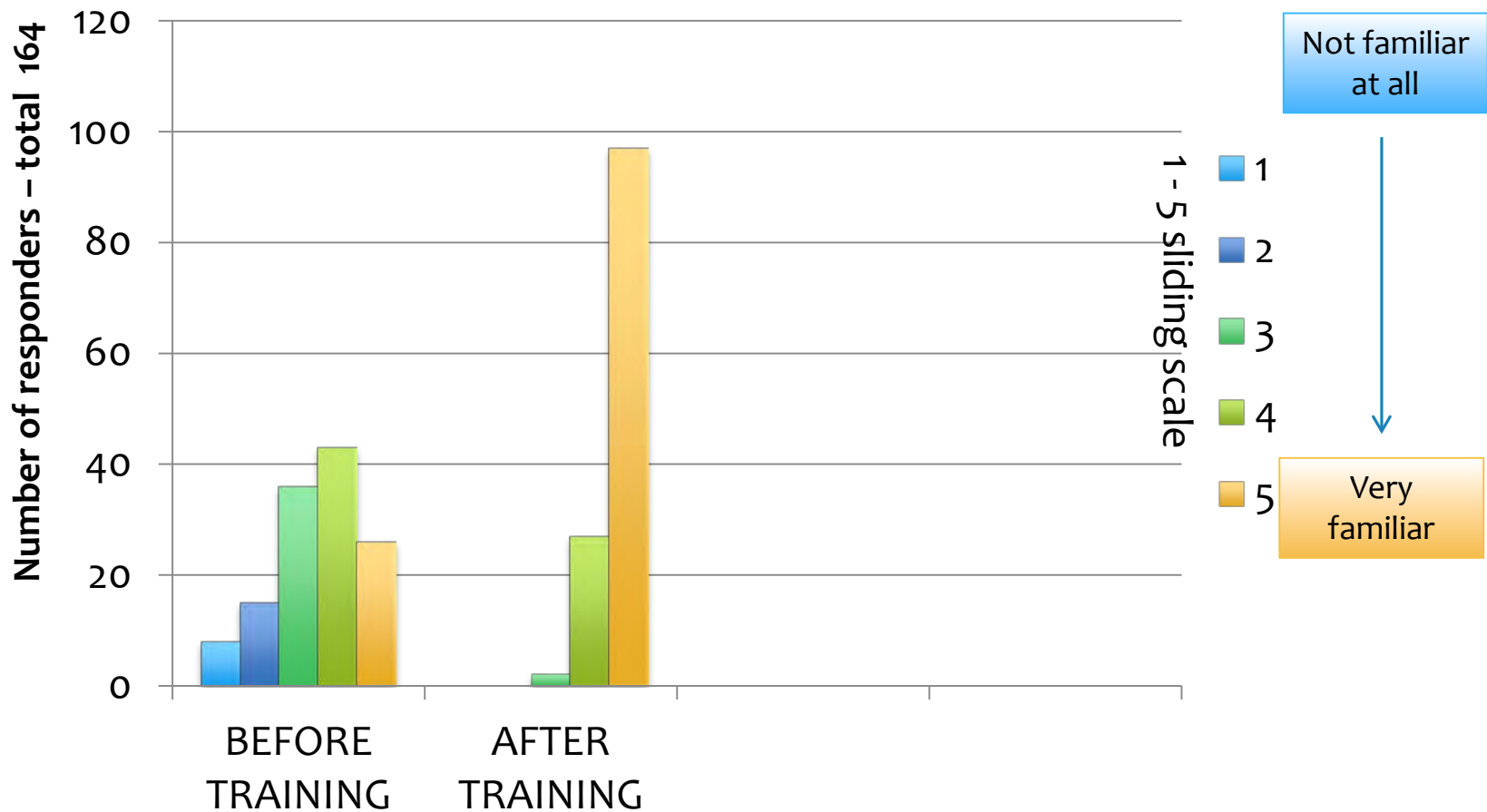




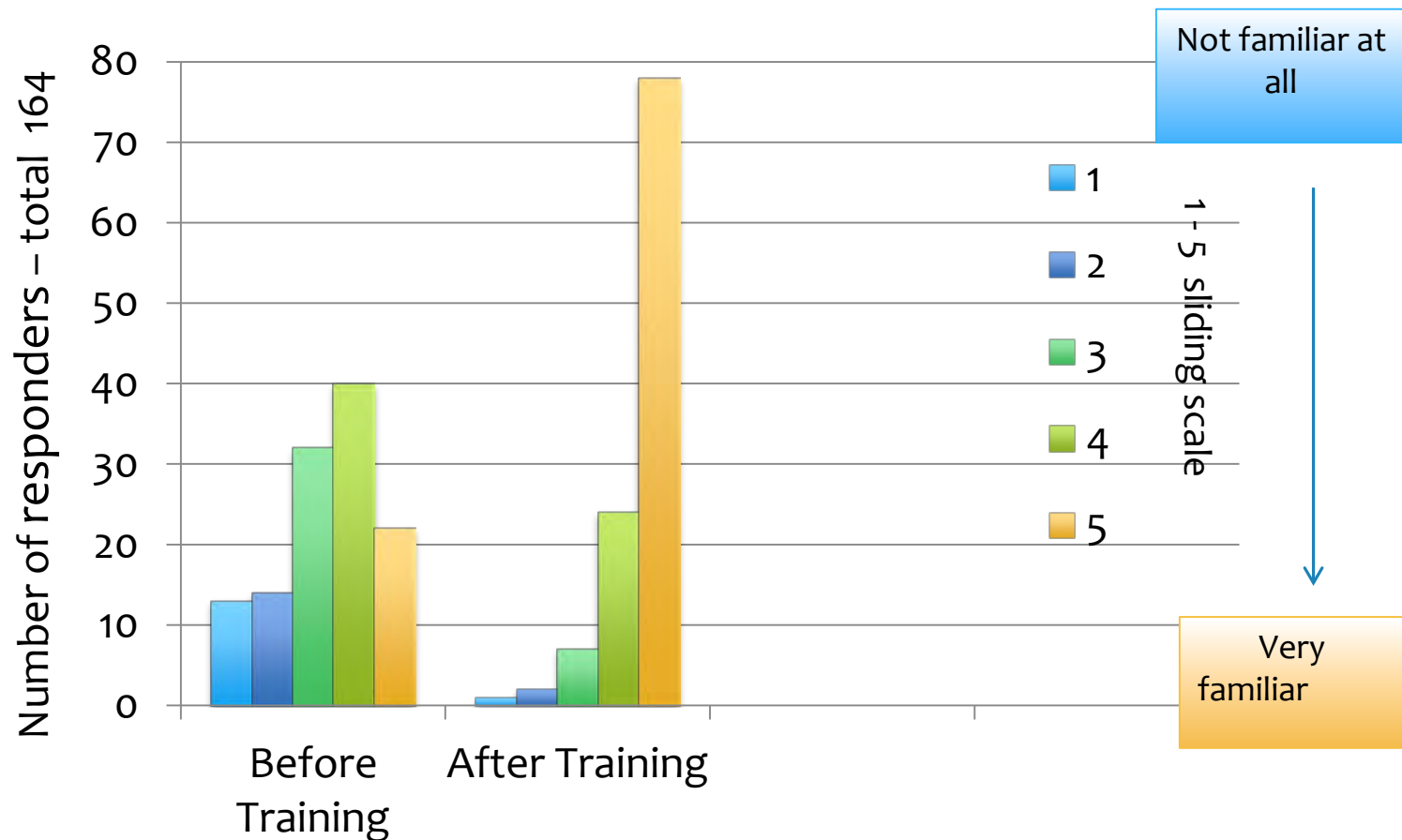
# Effectiveness of Training



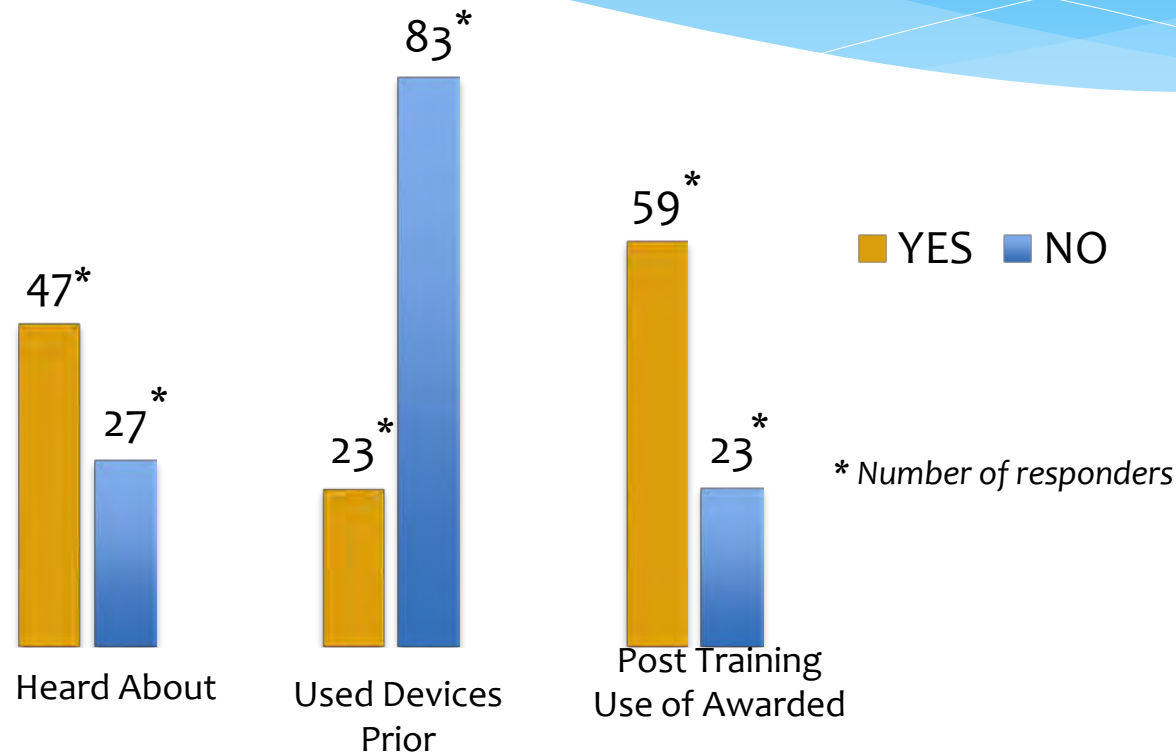
# Barotrauma Knowledge Lift From Combined Training



# Descending Tools Knowledge Lift From Combined Training



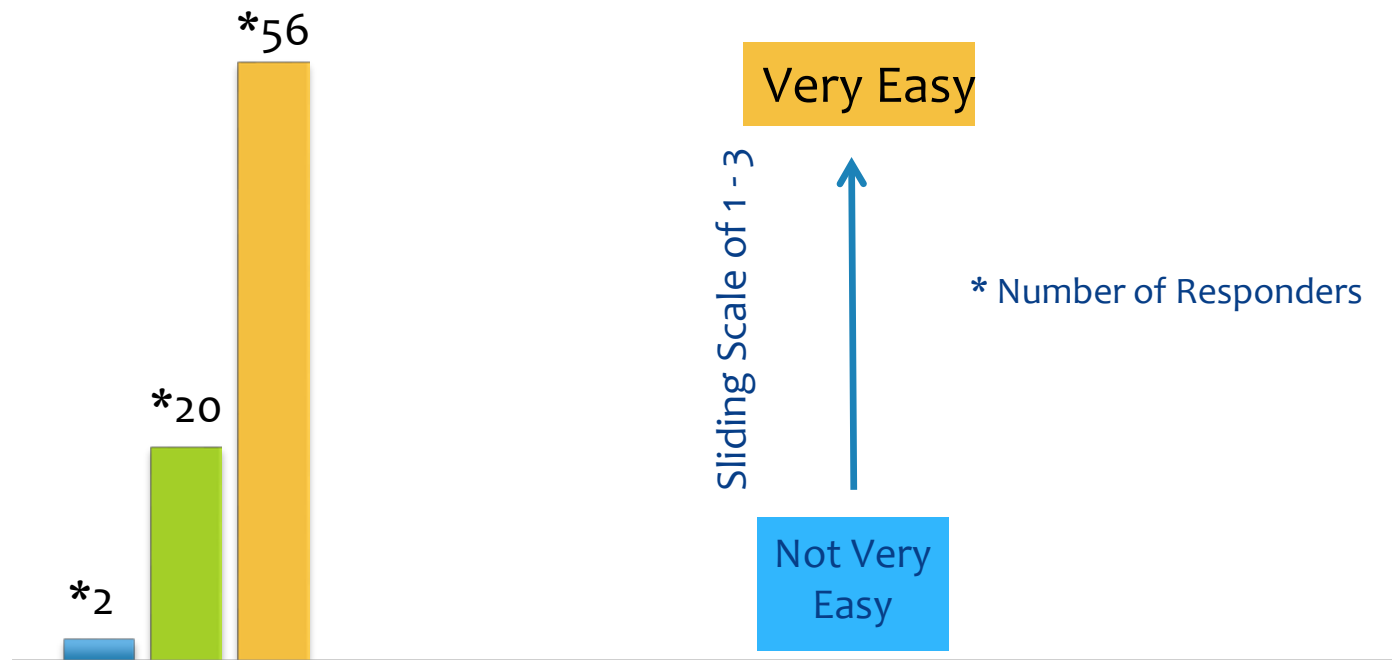
# Descending Device Knowledge and Use Prior to and Post Training (Behavioral Change)



# Responders Post Training Use of a Descending Device

FISH	NUMBER
Red snapper	52
Gag grouper	23
Red grouper	4
Scamp grouper	4
Black sea bass	24
Vermillion snapper	1
Mutton snapper	1
Red drum	1
Hogfish	1
Stripers	2
Triggerfish	2

# Ease of use of SeaQualizer Descending Device

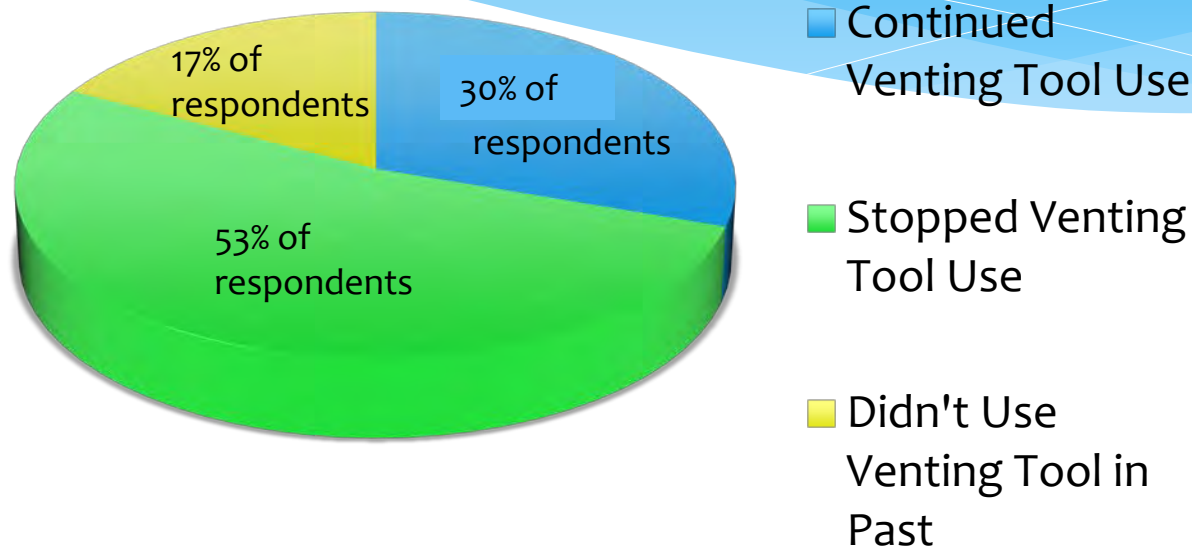




# Problems/Issues With Descending Device

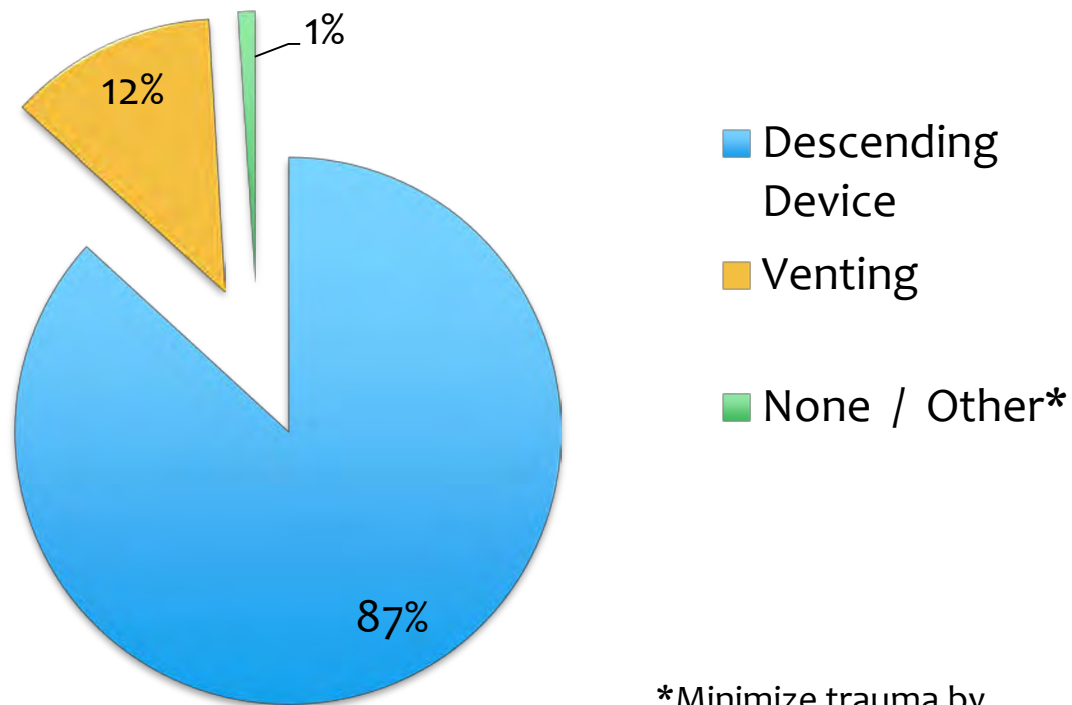
Problem/Issue	Number Reporting Problem/Issue
Have to have a dedicated rod rigged and ready to deploy	2
Depth setting not clearly labeled	1
Repeatedly failed to release at or deeper than programmed depth	1
Amount of weight needed/had to use downrigger ball to get large (30#) fish down	2
Clamp kept opening on large fish/clamp opened up several times	2
<b>No problems with device</b>	<b>7</b>

# Post Training Use of Venting Tool



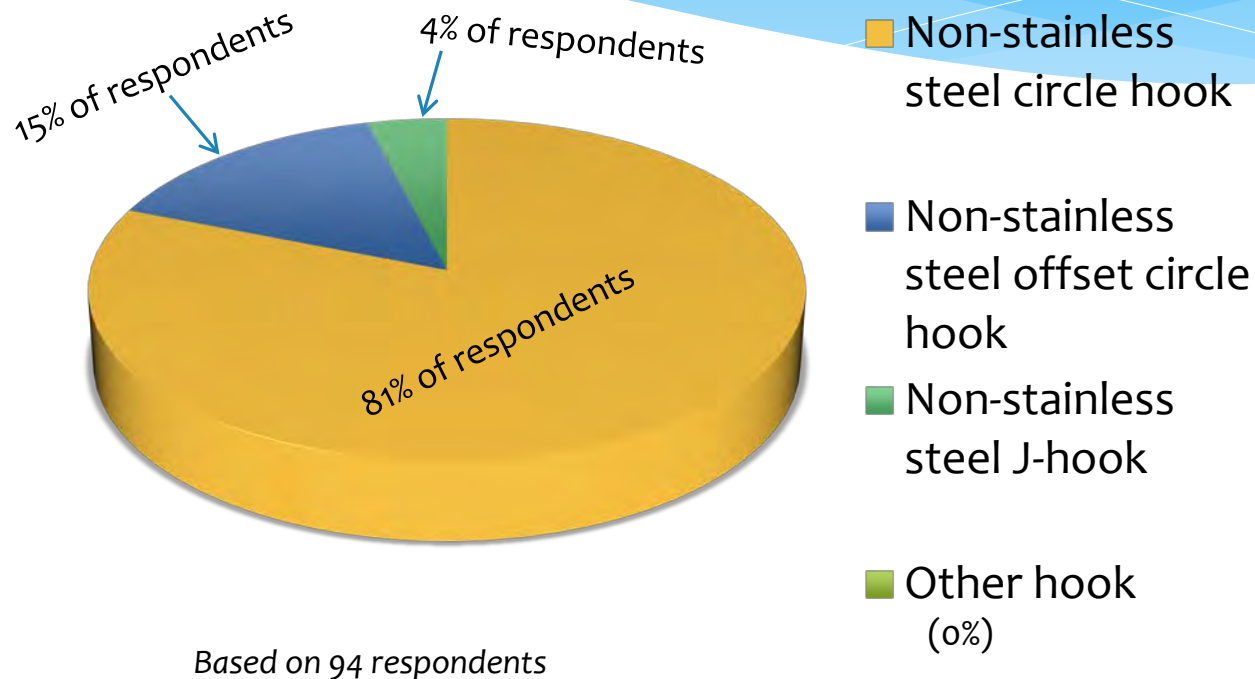
*Based on 99 angler responses*

## Post Training Preferred Method

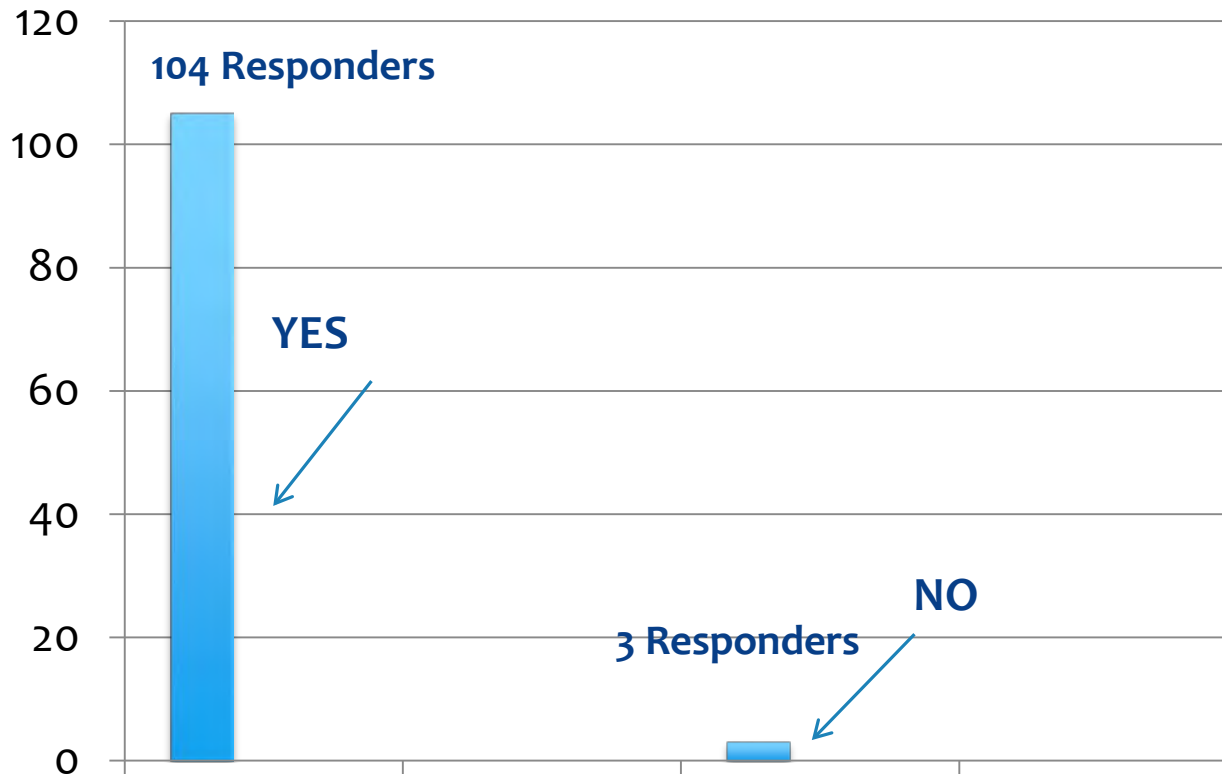


\*Minimize trauma by reeling up slowly

# Post Training Hook Use



## Post Training Knowledge Sharing of Learned Best Fishing Practices With Other Anglers



# A SPECIAL THANKS TO NOAA FISHERIES BREP PROJECT FOR GRANT FUNDING TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE

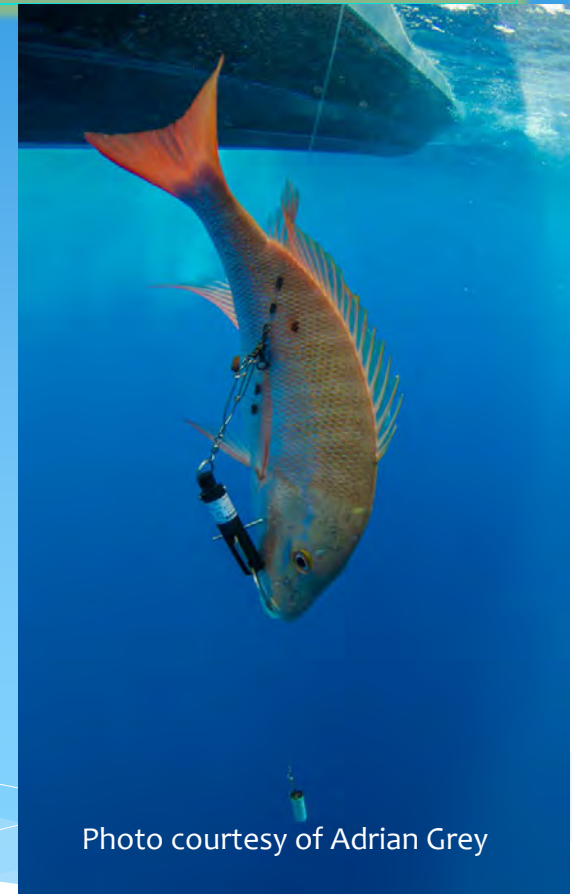
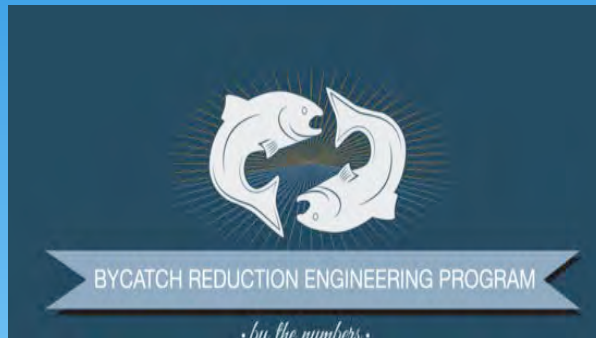


Photo courtesy of Adrian Grey

**TUTORIAL LINK**

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