



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION

ONE CONSERVATION WAY · BRUNSWICK, GA 31520 · 912-264-7218

WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

DOUG HAYMANS
DIRECTOR

January 23, 2026

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary, United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Secretary Lutnick,

The contents of this letter and attachments are in response to correspondence received on January 9, 2026, from NOAA Fisheries (NOAA) related to Georgia Department of Natural Resources' (GADNR) application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to pilot a mandatory data collection application for the recreational Red Snapper fishery off Georgia during 2026. We recognize some updates to our application were necessary and appreciate the opportunity to provide additional information to further support our request. In addition to minor text changes to the original application, we have included a section with the Agency questions and our responses.

At this time, Georgia is apprehensive about providing a number for Red Snapper harvest that will be included in our EFP. Any data the state would use to extrapolate or derive harvest numbers originate from MRIP, which are unreliable at best. The majority of MRIP harvest estimates for Georgia during Wave 4 in recent years (2006 -2025) have PSEs that do not meet the MRIP standard. Indeed, even MRIP offshore effort estimates for the same period are flagged as cautionary at best. Furthermore, when directed trips are considered for a suite of snapper/grouper species the PSEs demonstrate the data to be even more unreliable. Our greatest concern is the number will be used punitively to shorten the requested season, define a regional quota, and/or establish state allocations.

The only way forward for Georgia is to develop and test a pilot data collection program over the next three years. To be able to test the validity of the app, we request to be exempted from the recreational ACL and apply a Wave 4 season as a reasonable accountability measure that will allow for the pilot to be assessed alongside MRIP. We understand 1 year of data is not enough to make our case, which is why we will potentially request an additional 2 years beyond year 1.

We greatly appreciate your time and consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Doug Haymans

Cc: Eugenio Piñeiro Soler, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA
Andrew J. Strelcheck, Regional Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA
Annie Hawkins, Chief Strategist, NOAA
The Honorable Congressman Buddy Carter (GA-1)
Drs. Carolyn Belcher and Jared Flowers, Kathy Knowlton (GADNR CRD)



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Applicant

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Purpose

1. Determine if recreational landings of Red Snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) can be accurately reported and monitored through a state managed data collection program.
 - a. Develop and test a mandatory data collection program modeled from the VESL program currently being used by South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.
 - b. Validate state estimates of landings and discards against the same estimates produced by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).
2. Provide recreational anglers and for-hire anglers with increased fishing opportunities by offering a 2-month season.
3. Collect biological information including size, age, and reproductive characteristics (when possible).

Background

Since 2008, Red Snapper landings have either been prohibited or managed through short seasons which incited derby-style fisheries. Although the stock is not yet rebuilt (SEDAR 73

Update 2024), the results of the last four stock assessments have shown a strong rebuilding trajectory, which agrees with the high abundance observed by the recreational fishery. Contrary to this trend, fishing seasons have become increasingly shorter, with the high numbers of discards identified as the key issue.

Currently, the only source for recreational catch data in Georgia is MRIP. MRIP and its use for catch estimation has received a high level of scrutiny in recent years which resulted in numerous survey changes in the hope that the precision of estimates could be improved. For species commonly reported through Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) creel surveys, the survey performs adequately with percent standard errors (PSE) below 30%; however, for species that are rarely encountered during APAIS, like Red Snapper, the survey struggles to produce PSEs below 50%. Since 1981, the total catch estimates generated by MRIP for Red Snapper off Georgia have not shown a single PSE below 35%. Since 2008, Red Snapper have been managed under closed seasons or mini seasons which further erode the confidence in those estimates as MRIP is designed to sample two-month time periods. The lack of precision and a paucity of information about the number of recreational anglers who participate in saltwater fishing activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) confound the survey's ability to produce reliable catch estimates for Red Snapper.

Recreational interest groups engaged the South Atlantic states in 2024, asking them to consider a state led data collection and management approach for Red Snapper, similar to what had evolved for the Gulf states between 2012 and 2020. The four South Atlantic states met on four occasions between July 2024 and July 2025 to review the data programs in place throughout the Gulf and additional programs used on the Pacific west coast. Additional state directors' meetings were held virtually and in person to discuss potential paths forward, which resulted in a consensus among the states to apply for federal exempted fishing permits (EFPs) that would allow each South Atlantic state to evaluate alternative data collection approaches to MRIP. If the states are successful, the next step could lead to discussions on the roles the states could assume in management of Red Snapper and/or other offshore species.

Georgia is seeking an EFP for the recreational sector of the Red Snapper fishery only. Allocations for the sector have been determined through the Council process, which falls outside of the scope of this application. The focus for this EFP is to pilot a data reporting app for the recreational sector which will require mandatory reporting for all participants harvesting Red Snapper during Wave 4 (July 1- August 31) in the first year.

Methods

Licensure: This EFP will allow properly licensed private recreational and for-hire anglers to harvest Red Snapper from state and federal waters out to 200 nautical miles off Georgia. Proper licensure for private anglers currently includes a Georgia recreational fishing license

and Saltwater Information Program permit. Charter guides must be properly licensed in Georgia and, when fishing in the EEZ, must have a valid South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Permit for Snapper Grouper. All EFP trips must originate and terminate from a Georgia landing location. The requirement stipulated in 50 CFR 600.745 (b) (7) and (8) and (d) (7) for the inspection of and requirement for the issued NOAA Fisheries EFP to be in the possession of persons authorized will be accomplished by including a digital (view only) copy in the reporting application.

Season: MRIP was designed to sample 2-month intervals, not short pulses of fishing. However, since 2008 Red Snapper have been managed under seasonal closures or mini seasons, adding to the lack of confidence in the estimates produced for this fishery at the regional level. Compounded with the lack of confidence in state level catch data, discussions regarding state allocations would prove difficult at this time. As an alternative approach, Georgia will examine the effects of a 62-day season which would align with MRIP Wave 4. This will allow for a state survey to be validated with the equivalent MRIP wave. A longer season will provide anglers with greater flexibility and more opportunity to fish without causing fishing derby related behaviors. Georgia is requesting this seasonal variance for a minimum of one year.

A longer season would also allow for the collection of a larger sample of fishery-dependent biological data. GADNR Coastal Resources Division (CRD) hosts a carcass donation program for recreationally important fish species such as Southern Kingfish, Red Drum, and Spotted Seatrout; however, during previous Red Snapper seasons they were used for the collection of Red Snapper carcasses. Carcasses are processed by CRD staff for age and length information as well as sex and reproductive staging when gonads are present. Chest freezers are located at several sites along the coast. Each freezer contains a supply of storage bags, pens, and trip information cards for anglers to fill out and submit with their carcasses. Freezers will continue to be available for Red Snapper carcasses during the full duration of the EFP.

Size and Creel: Anglers will be allowed to keep one Red Snapper per person per day with no minimum size limit. The captain and crew on any charter or headboat trip will be prohibited from retaining their daily creel of Red Snapper.

Reporting: Participating anglers and for-hire guides will be required to engage a data reporting program to register to fish for Red Snapper under this EFP. To accomplish this task, Georgia will implement an electronic data collection program. Bluefin Data LLC currently provides the state of South Carolina with an electronic reporting platform for state licensed and federal charter vessels and headboats, known as VESL. Bluefin Data will develop a similar application for Georgia that will be used to collect landings and discard data from the private recreational sector. South Atlantic Charter/Headboat permitted guides already have mandatory reporting requirements associated with their permits (Southeast For-Hire

Integrated Electronic Reporting) and will use these established data collection applications to report.

Upon initial contact with the data reporting program, the private recreational angler will attest to conditions stipulated by the EFP including mandatory reporting during the defined season. If an angler does not agree with the conditions, they will not be allowed to legally harvest Red Snapper during the season. Anglers landing Red Snapper in Georgia will be required to report to the state system regardless of where the fish were caught.

Anglers landing Red Snapper in Georgia will be required to report to the state system regardless of where the fish were caught. Each angler will be required to obtain a trip number from the data reporting program when targeting Red Snapper. This code will be directly linked to the post-trip mandatory reporting requirement, which must be completed within 24 hours of the trip departure time. The mandatory report must be completed and submitted prior to receiving an authorization code to initiate a new trip. Anglers will have the ability to cancel any trip declarations prior to starting the trip if the fishing plan changes (e.g., inclement weather, mechanical issues, unforeseen conflict). For instances where non-licensed private recreational anglers (e.g., under 16 years of age) or licensed anglers who do not have access to a smartphone or computer that are fishing under this EFP, alternate trip participants may submit data on their behalf. A method will be included on the mandatory post-trip reporting application for this purpose; additional data fields will be displayed for the designated representative to complete reporting for these individuals.

Compliance will be enforced by GADNR law enforcement. If an officer intercepts a private recreational angler as they are leaving for or returning from trips targeting or retaining Red Snapper, they will verify authorization codes for that trip. Officers can also take note of for-hire fishing activity (specifically any landed Red Snapper) to ensure that the corresponding mandatory report is submitted. If an angler is found out of compliance, they will be denied future access to fish for Red Snapper under any associated EFP and could receive federal penalties for fishing out of season.

Registered users will be contacted by phone when errors occur, or if a trip is flagged as incomplete. Additional at-sea and landing intercepts by law enforcement can assist with verifying anglers have authorization codes and identify charter trips that can later be connected to a mandatory report. A current state project focused on obtaining trip level data for federally permitted charter vessels collected by an at-sea observer could be used as an additional source of validation. Additional catch data, including sizes and disposition of released fishes, are also collected during this project.

Outreach: Outreach materials will be created and distributed to assist recreational anglers and the charter/headboat fleet with understanding the expectations and requirements for participating under the EFP.

The outcome of the 2026 EFP will provide guidance on the need and refinement of future EFP applications. Currently Georgia is considering an additional two years, which would cover 2027 and 2028.

Data Objectives

1. Information to be collected through the state survey program:

- a. **Prior to fishing:** Mandatory Elements: Name and contact of registered angler (contact will be email and/or phone number) / Trip number / Trip date / Trip start time prior to trip initiation / Landing county and site. Voluntary Elements: Vessel registration number or US Coast Guard Documentation number
- b. **At trip completion:** Mandatory Elements: Trip end time / depth fished / Number of Red Snapper harvested / Number of Red Snapper released and general fate (alive or dead) / Hours spent fishing for Red Snapper. Voluntary Elements: Location / Habitat type (artificial reef, natural, or mix)

At the present time, which of the fields above will be included and identified as mandatory are still under consideration.

2. Determine harvest rates for private and for-hire recreational fisheries in Georgia when targeting Red Snapper.
3. Provide additional biological data for use in developing age-length keys for use in stock assessment.
4. Results of the EFP will be used to assist fisheries managers in future decisions regarding Red Snapper management.
5. Develop a more timely and reliable method for monitoring the catch of Red Snapper encountered by Georgia anglers.

Applicable CFR Regulations

- This EFP is submitted to the Southeast Regional Office under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), and regulations 50 CFR 600.745 (b) concerning exempted fishing.
- This EFP is requesting an exemption from the following regulations:

○ **50 CFR 622.181(c)(2) Red Snapper**

Red snapper may only be harvested or possessed in or from the South Atlantic EEZ during the commercial and recreational seasons as specified in §§ 622.183(b)(5) and 622.193(y). Any red snapper caught in the South Atlantic EEZ during a time other than the specified commercial or recreational seasons specified in § 622.193(y) must be released immediately with a minimum of harm. In addition, for a person on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, the prohibition on the harvest or possession of red snapper applies in the South Atlantic, regardless of where such fish are harvested or possessed, i.e., in state or Federal waters.

○ **50 CFR 622.8 (b) Quota closures**

When a quota specified in this part is reached or is projected to be reached, the Assistant Administrator will file a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. On and after the effective date of such notification, for the remainder of the fishing year, the applicable closure restrictions for such a quota, as specified in this part apply. See the applicable annual catch limits (ACLs), annual catch targets (ACTs), and accountability measures (AMs) sections in subparts B through U of this part for closure provisions when an applicable ACL or ACT is reached or projected to be reached.

○ **50 CFR 622.193(y)(2) Annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) for Red Snapper – Recreational Sector**

The recreational ACL for red snapper is 22,797 fish. The AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to announce the length of the recreational fishing season for the current fishing year. The length of the recreational fishing season for red snapper serves as the in-season accountability measure. See § 622.183(b)(5) for details on the recreational fishing season. On and after the effective date of the recreational closure notification, the bag and possession limits for red snapper are zero.

Potential Questions

Are there any anticipated environmental impacts on fisheries, marine mammals, endangered species, or essential fish habitat?

Recreational fishing occurs during the requested time intervals regardless of Red Snapper harvest, thus impacts to marine mammals, endangered species, and essential fish habitat should remain the same. Although the EFP will increase the

targeted trips for Red Snapper, the amount of recreational fishing that could result in the catch of Red Snapper should not be impacted. The requested EFP would allow for Red Snapper to be retained that would have been counted as discards during the fishing season. According to Topping et al (2019), it is possible an extended season would result in reduced effort and harvest rates as fishermen would have more opportunities to fish.

What is the potential risk to the Red Snapper stock?

According to the 2024 update of SEDAR 73, the stock is not overfished but not yet rebuilt. Although the 2024 update indicated overfishing was still occurring, Amendment 59 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region revised the fishing level reference point resulting in a change of status supporting overfishing is no longer occurring. It has also been noted in Amendment 59 that the rebuilding plan is ahead of schedule. As noted in the previous answer, the amount of recreational fishing that could result in the catch of Red Snapper should not be affected. As such, the potential risk to the stock is expected to be low.

References

SEDAR 73 Update Assessment. 2024. South Atlantic Red Snapper stock assessment report. Southeast Data, Assessment and Review. North Charleston, South Carolina. <http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/>.

Topping, T.S., M.K. Streich, M.R. Fisher, G.W. Stunz. 2019. A comparison of private recreational fishing harvest and effort for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper during derby and extended federal seasons and implications for future management. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*, 39:1311 – 1320.

Answers to Agency Questions Related to the November 10, 2025 Georgia EFP

- EFP regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b)(2)(v) explicitly require an application to identify the species (target or incidental) expected to be harvested and “the amount(s) of such harvest necessary to conduct the exempted fishing.” Your EFP application requests a number of days of fishing effort in lieu of a specific landings estimates, but does not specify the amount of red snapper expected to be harvested during these days of exempted fishing. Please include in your application an estimate of the amount of red snapper harvest expected to be associated with this effort.

The state of Georgia understands the reasoning such a number is needed, however, as stated earlier in the application, the recreational catch and effort estimates generated through MRIP are lacking both in quality and realism. Because the information collected during the mini-seasons is not reflective of the catch and effort that would occur during a longer season, any extrapolations of these numbers would lead to unrealistic numbers of harvest and removals.

- EFPs issued under regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 can exempt activities from federal fishery regulations but require us to evaluate biological information relevant to the proposal, including “any anticipated impacts on the environment, including impacts on fisheries, marine mammals, threatened or endangered species, and [Essential Fish Habitat.]” Your EFP application states your proposed project will not impact the environment, including fisheries, and that the potential risk to the South Atlantic red snapper stock is expected to be low. To assist us in conducting the required supporting analyses, please clarify in your application how your proposed project is consistent with Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements and further explain conclusory statements about any impacts on target or incidental species.

The EFP does not change the general landscape of recreational fishing practices in the South Atlantic during the proposed fishing period nor does it request any exemptions from the regulated fishing practices of the Snapper Grouper fishery. The requirement for descending devices, use of circle hooks, as well as recommended Best Fishing Practices all apply. The current creel, size, and seasons related to other federally managed species of the South Atlantic are not affected under this EFP. Because recreational fishing in the South Atlantic is open access, a dramatic increase in new recreational participants is not expected because of the EFP. Additionally, because Red Snapper co-occur with other species targeted during bottom fishing activities, one could argue that the amount of bottom fishing would not be expected to increase.

Because Red Snapper discards are directly attributed to management actions including season and possession limits, the EFP would allow for discarded fish to be retained. The season proposed during this EFP (Wave 4; July 1 -August 31) occurs during the wave with the highest rate of discards, and also during the wave with the higher rate of effort. Establishing a season during this time period would optimize the fishery's experience without shifting effort toward a season where fishing pressure would normally be lower.

- The South Atlantic Council has allocated 71.93% of the red snapper annual catch limit to the recreational sector and the remaining 28.07% to the commercial sector. Your EFP application does not propose any exempted fishing activity for the commercial sector. Please clarify, or affirm, that your request to authorize the exempted fishing activity you propose does not include any changes to the existing management measures for the commercial fishery, with a season that is currently expected to open the second Monday of July.

New text was added to the original application's Background section. Georgia is focused on piloting a mandatory recreational data collection app for Red Snapper. Any changes to the allocation or other management approaches should be discussed and considered through the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's process.

- Your application indicates you will examine the effects of a 61- or 62-day season, which would align with MRIP waves 3 (May 1-June 30), 4 (July 1-August 31), or 5 (September 1-October 31). NOAA Fisheries will need to publish a Federal Register notice and accept public comments once your application is complete. We will also need to prepare environmental analyses before a decision on your EFP is made. We expect this to take until early-May 2026, and recommend that you specify either wave 4 or 5 as your preferred start date for the EFP.

The initial inclusion of the three waves was to have a dialog about which time period would be more palatable for the recreational fishery. In examining the trends in effort and discards, Wave 4 would optimize catch opportunities while reducing the potential for increased fishing pressure and discards. The related text in the original application has been modified accordingly.

- We encourage you to work closely with NOAA Fisheries' Office of Science and Technology to provide expanded details regarding your survey design and implementation. Some suggestions of clarifying information related to your surveys include:

The development of a large-scale specialized data collection program would require substantial funding to ensure its successful execution and would have extensive coordination with the Office of Science and Technology (OST) to ensure that the survey

design and implementation would meet the qualifications for sampling and estimation methodology to request NOAA Fisheries certification. Through the current EFP, Georgia will be focused on mandatory reporting; however, it is possible a sampling framework may be investigated. At that time, conversations with OST would be initiated.

- How often do you intend to generate catch estimates? Weekly? Monthly?

During Year 1 of this EFP, absolute harvest and discard values for the two-month wave will be provided to NOAA Fisheries' OST by the end of the subsequent wave. The baseline data collected in Year One will provide valuable information for determining if the state program will continue under mandatory reporting or sampling design methodology will be needed in the future.

- Do you intend to conduct dockside sampling to validate reported catches, in addition to inspections by law enforcement?

MRIP will continue to be conducted during the EFP season as well as throughout the remaining months. The reporting app will also have a check-off asking the reporting angler to indicate if they were interviewed by a creel agent.

- How will information from the dockside validation survey be used? Specifically, is the information a component of a capture-recapture estimation approach or is the intent to adjust for off frame effort (i.e., trips made by anglers that had the app and didn't report (<100% compliance) and/or anglers who failed to register for the app?

During year one of the EFP, any dockside information collected during the MRIP APAIS or Law Enforcement engagement regarding Red Snapper will be used to determine rates of non-compliance.

- How will the angler intercepts surveys at the completion of a trip be administered? (e.g., probability sample, opportunistic or other non-probability approaches)

No additional angler intercepts survey will be conducted outside of MRIP APAIS.

- How will data be managed, processed, and estimated? Will data be provided to ASMFC/ACCSP?

Because these data are collected through a pilot, all data collected under this EFP will be internally stored, managed, and processed securely within Coastal Resources Division.

- How will you ensure compliance with app-based reporting remains high? Similar survey designs in the Gulf (e.g., Snapper Check) indicated compliance was as low as 31% during initial years of survey design development.

Following SCDNR's example, Georgia is committed to providing a significant level of outreach and education to the recreational sector prior to the start of the EFP and throughout the rest of the year to increase understanding and compliance. SCDNR has demonstrated their ability to achieve high compliance rates (~75%) associated with the licensed for-hire fishery which has been required to provide trip-level data through mandatory reporting since 1993. Additionally, the VESL application is being specifically designed to maximize positive engagement and angler experience with a clear and easy to use format. Industry leaders support all four states' EFP projects and have pledged to disseminate information and support the proposed mandatory reporting requirements for Red Snapper. Leveraging with these partners will also have a direct impact on increased compliance.

- Will survey methods include correction factors for non-reporting - either trips not declaring or trips not completing final reports? If yes, please explain.

No correction factors will be applied at this time.

- Once a trip is completed, how soon will anglers be required to report? Immediately upon landing? Within 24 hours? Some other time period?

This detail was accidentally omitted from the methods section. Added to the text is the requirement to report the trip within 24 hrs. of landing; however, educational materials will encourage reporting as soon as the trip is completed.

- To reduce reporting burden, consider requiring one person on the vessel to report total catch and effort rather than every angler.

To be consistent with the legislative text for Georgia's reef/migratory fishes endorsement, the EFP requires individual angler reporting.

- Your application indicates the survey will only be conducted during the red snapper season. How does the EFP application address out-of-season red snapper discards?

As stated previously, Georgia will continue to conduct MRIP related data collection throughout the year. Until such time that the pilot program can be adequately assessed, it is not being considered as a replacement for MRIP.

- Federal charter/headboat permits are open-access. Other South Atlantic states have proposed prohibiting participation in the EFP to anyone issued a new Federal permit after January 1, 2026. Is Georgia considering a similar restriction and, if not, how will the EFP account for potential effort increases?

Georgia does not intend to limit access for charter/headboat permits as no additional privileges are being provided which would increase permit demand. That is to say, no additional days, areas, creel, or size limits are being created for the for-hire fleet which would distinguish it from the everyday recreational angler; therefore, we see no reason why demand for the permits would increase. Adding a control date would only serve to complicate the understanding of the EFPs parameters.

- Your application indicates a reef fish/migratory fish permit is being considered by the Georgia Legislature. You also indicate that the EFP is being designed to function without this permit should it not be available or implemented in time. Please provide more detail regarding this endorsement and expected timeline.

Reference to the reef/migratory fishes endorsement has been removed from the application. Initially, Georgia was hopeful the endorsement would be available as a requirement that would help with the implementation of the reporting app. However, the exact timing of House Bill 443 passing through the Legislature and the timeline of developing the regulatory requirements is unknown. Georgia is now looking to develop the endorsement for implementation in 2027. The endorsement will be primary in developing the Year-2 EFP.

- To the extent possible, please explain how data collection and sampling efforts may be coordinated with other states in the region in order to maximize utility of information gathered through the EFPs for enhancing scientific and management programs, advancing our collective understanding of this public trust resource, and improving best available scientific information.

Florida already has a data collection program that has been used successfully in the Gulf and has been approved by MRIP. Because Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina do not have a similar data collection program or the current capacity to develop one, the three states collectively recognized the need to have a similar approach for collection of recreational information and initially were attempting to submit a single EFP. The three states worked through their methodology sections together to ensure the core of the data collection and app utility are as similar as possible. However, state-specific regulatory nuances resulted in the three states submitting individual EFPs. The methodology section has been modified as needed to ensure that the consistency of approach is more apparent and the VESL User's Guide has been included for reference.

The South Atlantic state agencies will continue to coordinate and collaborate throughout the EFP process. State agency staff from the four states will meet at least bi-weekly to discuss any challenges as the EFPs are occurring and how each state is working to resolve those challenges. States will try and have as similar a response as possible to any challenges that occur during the EFPs and continually learn from the experiences of the other states. At the end of year 1 of the EFPs, the state agency staff will meet at least once for an all-day, in-person meeting to discuss lessons learned and changes for year 2. These discussions will ensure the data collected are as similar as possible, enabling a direct comparison of effort, landings, and angler behavior across the region. Any differences will be discussed and changes made (if possible) within each state's authority to ensure similarity across experiments and useable data for the future. Following the state agency meeting, a meeting will also be held at the end of year 1 with NOAA Fisheries and the states about how year 1 went, including what challenges were encountered, and how the states propose to modify their EFPs for year 2. These meetings serve as an accountability measure to fix any problems encountered before year 2 begins. Any modifications to EFPs will be submitted by all states for subsequent years as changes are made to the methodology.

- Your application identifies two regulatory exemptions. We recommend also including a request for an exemption from 50 CFR 622.193(y)(2) - Recreational sector. The recreational ACL for red snapper is 22,797 fish. The AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to announce the length of the recreational fishing season for the current fishing year. The length of the recreational fishing season for red snapper serves as the in-season accountability measure. See § 622.183(b)(5) for details on the recreational fishing season. On and after the effective date of the recreational closure notification, the bag and possession limits for red snapper are zero.

So noted and the suggested exemption has been added to the application.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

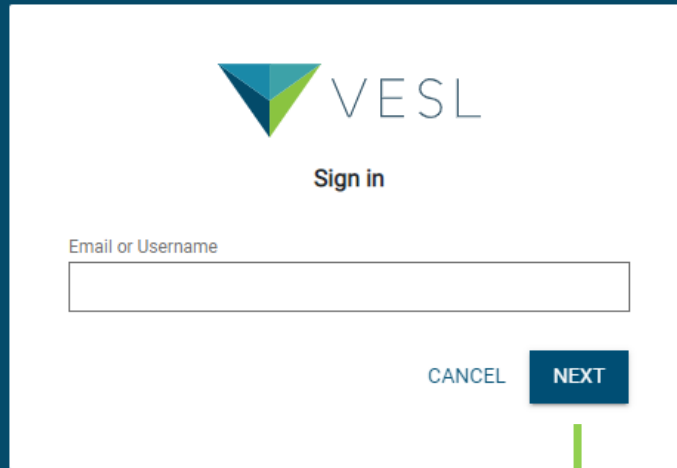


Overview of For-Hire Electronic Reporting

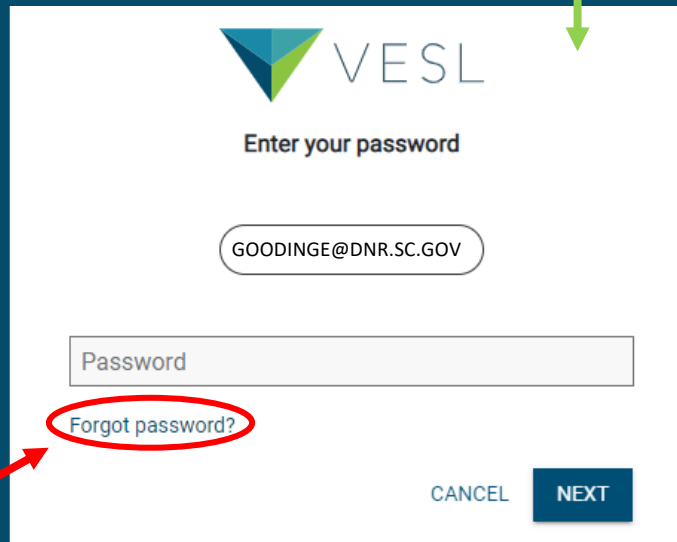
For questions contact:

Sydney Bates
Recreational Data Coordinator
(843) 953-8748
CharterReporting@dnr.sc.gov

Elizabeth Gooding
Fisheries Statistics Section Manager
(843) 953-0119






The image shows the VESL sign-in screen. At the top is the VESL logo, which consists of a stylized 'V' made of three triangles in shades of blue and green, followed by the text 'VESL'. Below the logo is the text 'Sign in'. Underneath is a text input field labeled 'Email or Username'. At the bottom right of the form are two buttons: 'CANCEL' and 'NEXT'. A green arrow points from the 'NEXT' button down to the next screen.





The image shows the VESL password entry screen. At the top is the VESL logo. Below it is the text 'Enter your password'. Underneath is a rounded rectangular field containing the email address 'GOODINGE@DNR.SC.GOV'. Below that is a password input field labeled 'Password'. At the bottom left, the text 'Forgot password?' is circled in red, with a red arrow pointing to it from the bottom left of the slide. At the bottom right are two buttons: 'CANCEL' and 'NEXT'.

If you forget your password, click here to reset it. Support@vesldata.com will send a link to the email address we have on file for you. Be sure to check your junk folder and add VESL support to your known contacts to avoid lost emails.



- 
CHARTER TICKET
- Dashboard
- Reporting Status
- Create Trip
- Create No Business
- Find Trip
- Manage
 - Entities
 - Reporting
 - Exports
 - Users

 
Reporting Status



See an overview of your activity and compliance by month or week (for federally permitted charters)

 
Create Trip

Enter data for a new trip

 
Create No Business

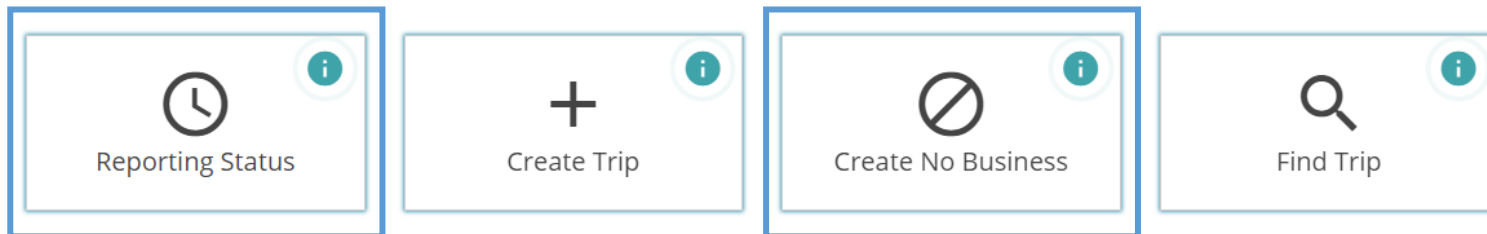
File a No Business (no activity) Report for a certain month(s)

 
Find Trip

See activity/trips for a timeframe you select

These tabs will take you to the same page.

By clicking on these 3 stacked bars, a drop-down navigation menu will appear to the left. The options on this menu are the same as the tabs on the Dashboard (homepage). You can use this menu while on any screen in the site.



We'll explore each of these tabs/pages, with the current working page noted in the upper left throughout the tutorial. Remember that the Reporting Status and Create No Business are the same page – we'll cover submitting no activity in Reporting Status.

In the Reporting Status page, you'll see an overview of the entire fiscal year. Remember DNR's fiscal year is **July 1 → June 30**.



Reporting Status



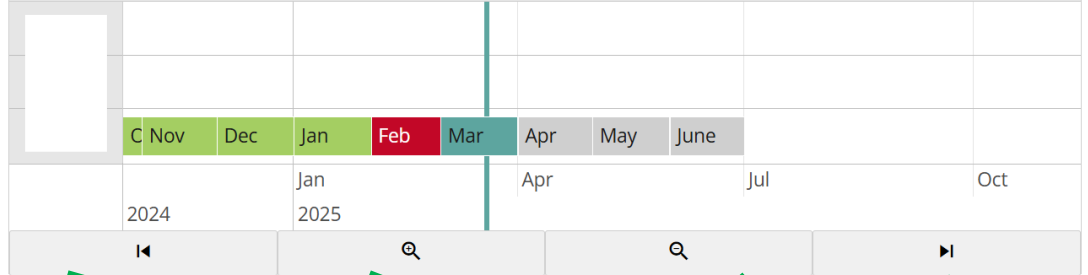
FILTERS

Vessel

LEGEND

- Period is out of compliance and past deadline
- Reporting period is over, but not past the deadline
- Current filing period
- Period is open for filing
- Period is compliant

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY



NOTIFICATIONS [1]

- February: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

Use these buttons to change the view of the compliance timeline.

2025 - October 10/01/2024 - 10/31/2024	7 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - November 11/01/2024 - 11/30/2024	1 PENDING TRIP 10 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - December 12/01/2024 - 12/31/2024	11 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - January 01/01/2025 - 01/31/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - February 02/01/2025 - 02/28/2025	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - March 03/01/2025 - 03/31/2025	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS



Create No Business

FILTERS
Vessel

- LEGEND
- Period is out of compliance and past deadline
 - Reporting period is over, but not past the deadline
 - Current filing period
 - Period is open for filing
 - Period is compliant

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

	C Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	
			Jan			Apr		Jul	Oct
2024			2025						

NOTIFICATIONS [1]

February: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

2025 - October	7 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - November	1 PENDING TRIP	
2025 - December	11 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - January	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - February	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - March	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - April	--	FILE NO BUSINESS

If you don't fill out a trip entirely, you'll have an incomplete trip saved. If this is your only trip for a month, you'll be marked out of compliance. You can click on the message info (blue letters) to edit, complete and submit trips.

Click this to report no activity for a particular month. You can click it again to undo the action. This can also be done for future months if no activity is expected.



Reporting Status



Create No Business



Federal Permits:

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

2024w39	2024w40	2024w41	2024w42	2024w43	2024w44	2024w45
6	11	16	21	26	1	6
October 2024				November 2024		

NOTIFICATIONS [0]

2025 - 2024w39 09/30/2024 - 10/06/2024	2 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w40 10/07/2024 - 10/13/2024	3 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w41 10/14/2024 - 10/20/2024	1 SUBMITTED TRIP	
2025 - 2024w42 10/21/2024 - 10/27/2024	3 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w43 10/28/2024 - 11/03/2024	4 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w44 11/04/2024 - 11/10/2024	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2024w45 11/11/2024 - 11/17/2024	1 SUBMITTED TRIP	
2025 - 2024w46 11/18/2024 - 11/24/2024	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS

If you purchase federal permits, your reporting requirements will automatically switch to weekly rather than monthly, as shown.

As long as you report your trips through VESL to SCDNR, your reports will be sent to SERO automatically.

Federal Permits:



Reporting Status



Create No Business

The charter shown on the right is compliant for SCDNR, but out of compliance for SERO.

If you do not report one week in a month, you will be compliant for SCDNR, but out of compliance for SERO and will not be able to renew your federal permits.

This also applies for pending trips. If you only have pending trips, and no submitted trips for a week, you are out of compliance for SERO.

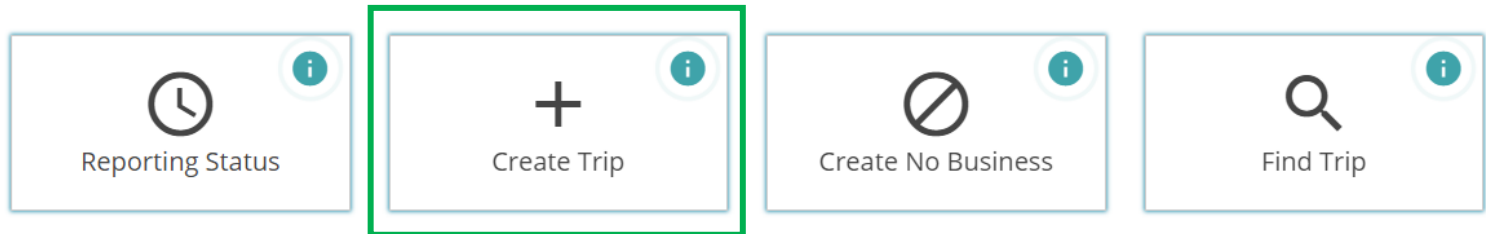
COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

2024...	2025w01	2025w02	2025w03	2025w04	2025w05	2025w06	2025w07	2025w08	2025w09
Jan 2025					Feb				Mar

NOTIFICATIONS [1]

25w06: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

Week	Status	Action
2025 - 2024w52 12/30/2024 - 01/05/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w01 01/06/2025 - 01/12/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w02 01/13/2025 - 01/19/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w03 01/20/2025 - 01/26/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w04 01/27/2025 - 02/02/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w05 02/03/2025 - 02/09/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w06 02/10/2025 - 02/16/2025	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w07 02/17/2025 - 02/23/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w08 02/24/2025 - 03/02/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w09 03/03/2025 - 03/09/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w10 03/10/2025 - 03/16/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS



Now we'll take a look at creating a trip.

Remember, your reporting requirements are trip-level, so if you make multiple trips in a day, you'll need to submit a trip for each one.

+
Create Trip

Use these icons to enter trip date & time and location. Smaller windows will appear to help you select.

New Trip

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ
03/18/25 10:00 AM

Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ
03/18/25 03:00 PM

Vessel * ⓘ

of Anglers * ⓘ: 3

of Crew * ⓘ: 1

Location

Departing Marina * ⓘ
Wappoo Cut Public Boa...

Location ⓘ
32, 79 - A2

Locale ⓘ
ESTUARINE

Reef ⓘ

Fishing Activity

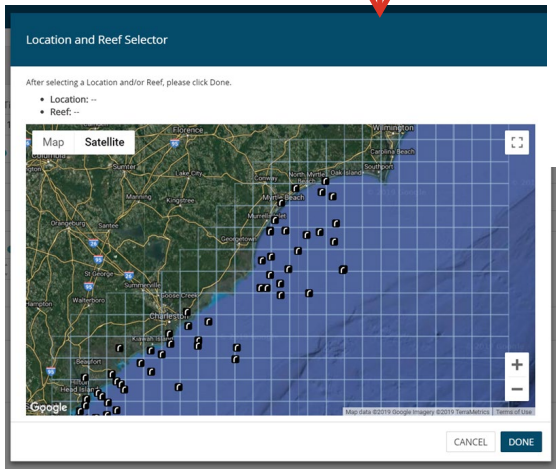
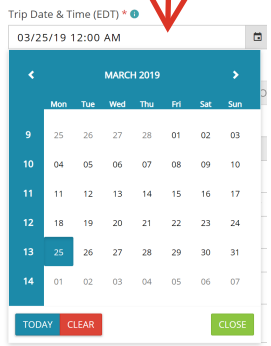
Min Depth * ⓘ: 3 FT

Max Depth * ⓘ: 15 FT

Hours Fished * ⓘ: 4 HRS

Target Species ⓘ: Drum, Red

Fishing Methods * ⓘ: ROD AND REEL (BOTTOM)



12 : 00 AM

Scroll up/down for hrs/mins

Click to switch AM/PM

Hours fished = time actually spent fishing. Excludes running time, etc.

Next, we'll cover choosing your fishing location and the interactive map.



Common Problem: Overlapping Trips

+
Create Trip

Sometimes when creating a trip, the end date accidentally jumps a couple days. You will then be unable to submit a trip later in the week during the trip dates accidentally listed.

1 error must be resolved before submitting.
• The trip start to trip end time overlap an existing trip for this vessel.

This is the error message you will see when trying to submit a trip within dates from extended trip.

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) *

09/12/24 02:00 PM

Trip End (EDT) *

09/12/24 05:00 PM

To check for this error: go to reporting status to review trips and see dates. See date change below.

*Remember: this trip is still pending and needs to be submitted when overlap is fixed!

<input type="checkbox"/>	TRIP # ^	TRIP DATE & TIME v	TRIP END v	LAST MODIFIED v	STATUS
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	09-12-2024 02:00 PM	09-12-2024 05:00 PM	03-24-2025 02:12 PM	Pending
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	09-10-2024 09:00 AM	09-17-2024 12:00 PM	03-24-2025 02:11 PM	Submitted

Staff can see pending trips, so if you are having trouble clearing an error, call and let us walk you through it.

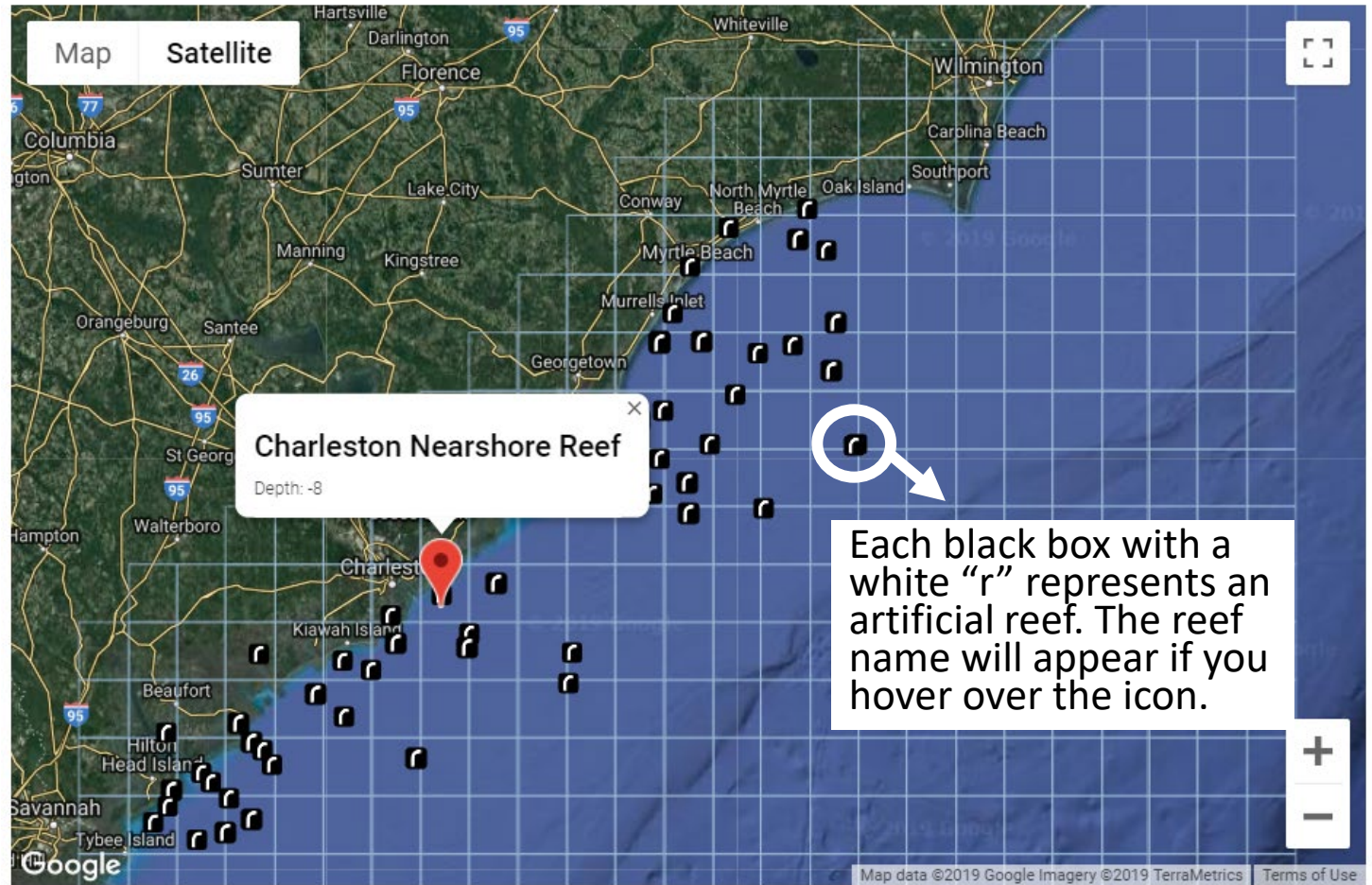
Location and Reef Selector

After selecting a Location and/or Reef, please click Done.

- Location: 32, 79 - B2 ✕
- Reef: Charleston Nearshore Reef ✕

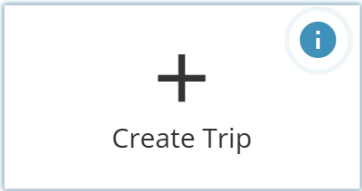
Note: if you click on the wrong box or reef, click the red "x" next to the location/reef name.

Each of these boxes represents a 10x10 sq. mile area. Select the box in which most of the fishing activity occurred. If you also fished on an artificial reef, click on the black box that represents it. You'll see the location and reef name populate **above**. Then click done in the bottom right. If no fishing took place on a reef, select your location and then click done.



CANCEL

DONE



New Trip

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ

Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ

Vessel * ⓘ

of Anglers * ⓘ

of Crew * ⓘ

Location

Departing Marina * ⓘ

Location ⓘ

Locale ⓘ

Reef ⓘ

Marina/landing used.
If name doesn't appear,
enter "Not listed"

of Crew: total number
of crew aboard during the
charter. This includes the
captain and any mates.
This does not include the
anglers.

If you consistently target
multiple species, please
alternate them per trip.

Fishing Activity

Min Depth * ⓘ FT

Max Depth * ⓘ FT

Hours Fished * ⓘ HRS

Target Species ⓘ

Fishing Methods * ⓘ

Now that all of your effort information is entered and accurate, click NEXT to continue to the catch section of the trip. If you have any errors or an incomplete section, you'll get a warning pop up so you can correct it before moving on. →

+
Create Trip

h
kept from

If a zero value applies to a field, the number "0" must be entered

Clicking drop down arrow lists commonly caught species

- 223 total options
Type to filter
- Amberjack, Greater
168689
- Croaker, Atlantic
169283
- Drum, Black
169288
- Drum, Red
169290
- Flounder, Southern

Details

Catch Details

Species	Kept	Lbs Kept	Released Alive	Released Dead
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

If this is the only species you caught

If you need to add additional species

Details

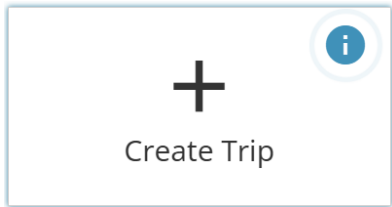
Catch Details

^ COLLAPSE MULTI-ENTRY × CLEAR ALL

Species	Kept	Lbs Kept	Released Alive	Released Dead
× Amberjack, Greater	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Croaker, Atlantic	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Drum, Black	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Drum, Red	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Flounder, Southern	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

This drop down allows for a species favorite list to enter repeatedly caught species easily



Details




Catch Details

Species ¹ Kept ¹ Lbs Kept ¹ Released Alive Released Dead

☰ [Dropdown] [Dropdown] [Dropdown] LBS [Dropdown] [Dropdown]

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW


Edit (blue pencil) or delete (red trash can) species info

SPECIES	KEPT	LBS KEPT	RELEASED ALIVE	RELEASED DEAD
  Croaker, Atlantic	3	3.00 lbs	0	0
Additional species, click here 				


SAVE SUBMIT

Your trip will not be saved and you won't be compliant unless you SAVE, then click SUBMIT!!






Reporting Status



Create Trip



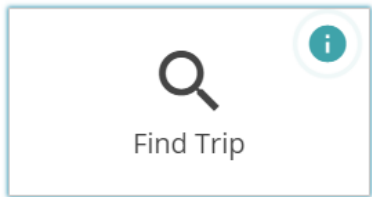
Create No Business



Find Trip

Now let's explore Find Trip.

This icon allows you to see activity/trips for a timeframe you select.



You can sort trips by any of these categories by clicking on the column header

<input type="checkbox"/>	TRIP # ^	TRIP DATE & TIME ^	TRIP END ^	LAST MODIFIED ^	STATUS
<input type="checkbox"/>	919	12-17-2024 09:00 AM	12-17-2024 01:00 PM	12-18-2024 12:53 PM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	918	11-29-2024 12:30 PM	11-29-2024 04:30 PM	11-29-2024 10:42 PM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	917	11-12-2024 12:30 PM	11-12-2024 04:30 PM	11-12-2024 05:34 PM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	916	11-02-2024 12:00 PM	11-02-2024 04:00 PM	11-03-2024 12:18 AM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	915	11-02-2024 07:30 AM	11-02-2024 11:30 AM	02-12-2025 02:32 PM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	914	11-01-2024 08:30 AM	11-01-2024 12:30 PM	12-04-2024 03:57 PM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	913	10-28-2024 09:00 AM	10-28-2024 12:00 PM	10-28-2024 07:35 PM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	912	10-26-2024 01:00 PM	10-26-2024 05:00 PM	03-18-2025 12:58 PM	Pending
<input type="checkbox"/>	911	10-26-2024 08:30 AM	10-26-2024 12:30 PM	10-26-2024 03:48 PM	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	910	10-25-2024 08:30 AM	10-25-2024 12:30 PM	02-12-2025 02:33 PM	Submitted

First Previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Next Last

*All times are in Eastern Time

FILTERS

Vessel
Test Vessel (SCXXXX... x)

Date Range ⓘ
This Month v

License ⓘ
100001 v

Status ⓘ
All v

Date Range ⓘ
Last 12 months v
Last 30 days
This Week
This Month
This Year
Last 12 months
Year + Month
Custom

Status ⓘ
All
Deleted
Pending
Submitted

By clicking on Date Range dropdown, you can select any time period you'd like to see your data appear for. You can also filter by Status. If you accidentally delete a trip, it can always be recovered.

Eye icon = view
Pencil icon = edit

HELP & SUPPORT

Browser address bar: <https://vesldata.com/user/dashboard>

Navigation bar: CHARTER TICKET DASHBOARD

Navigation icons: Home, Notifications, Profile, Help, User

Reporting Status

Create Trip

Create No Business

Find Trip

South Carolina DNR Support

Phone: 843-953-8748

Email: charterreporting@dnr.sc.gov

FAQs: [Help Center](#)

VESL SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK

[VIEW KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS](#)

[TERMS OF USE](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#)

Navigation icons: Notifications, Home, Help, User

Sydney Bates
bates@dnr.sc.gov

[CHANGE PASSWORD](#)

[SIGN OUT](#)

Frequently Asked Questions can be found here!

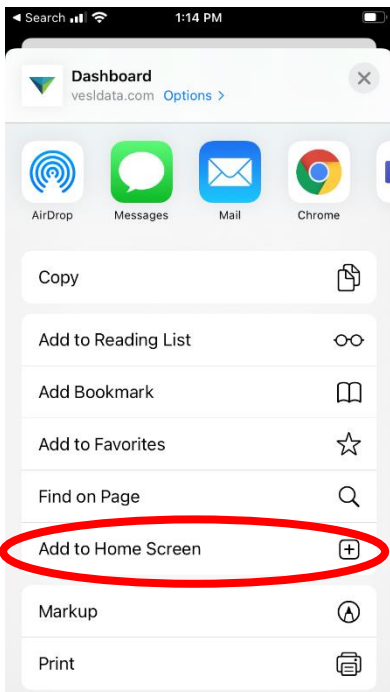
For help with reporting process, how-to, permits etc., contact here for SCDNR - Sydney Bates

Unfortunately, as of now, the VESL app is not compatible with SCDNR. These steps show you how to pin VESL to your homescreen as an app.

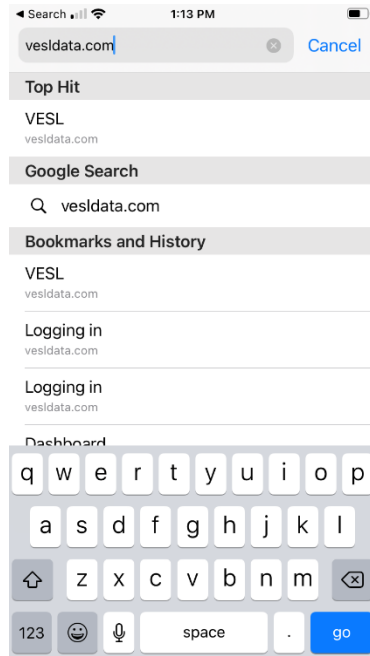
Pinning VESL to Your Home Screen



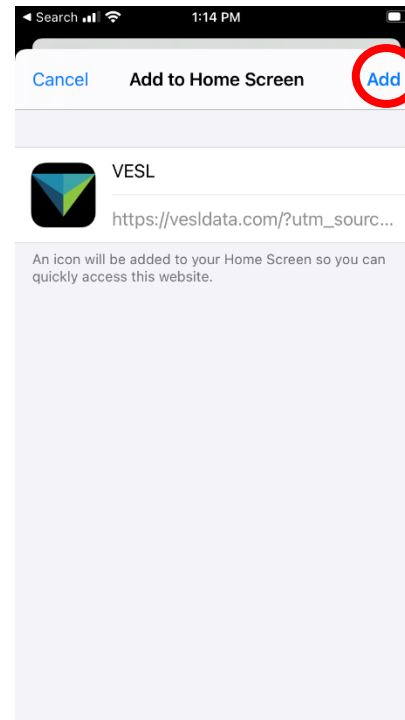
Step 1: Use Safari for Apple products and Chrome for Android products.



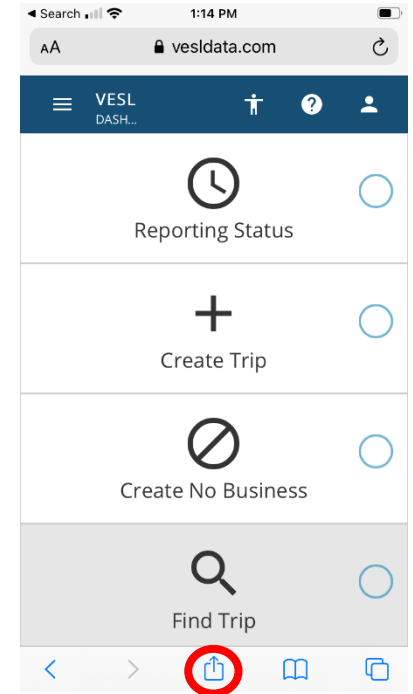
Step 4: Scroll down until you see “Add to Home Screen,” circled above.



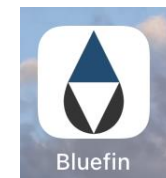
Step 2: Type vesldata.com into the browser.



Step 5: Click “Add,” circled above.

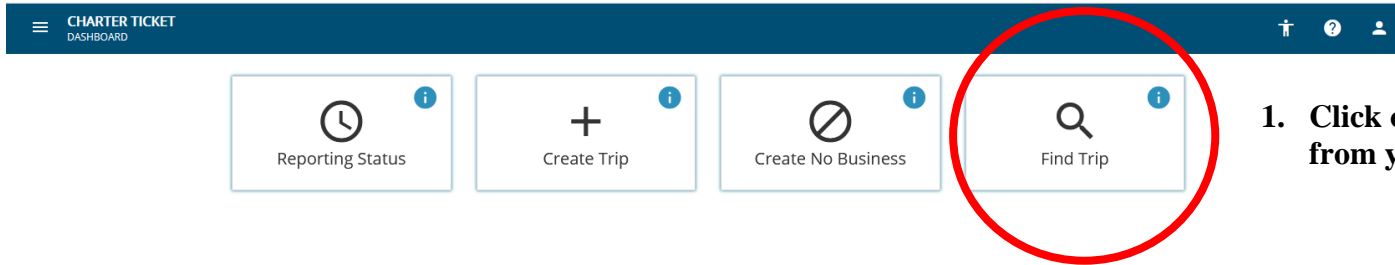


Step 3: When the dashboard appears, click on the symbol circled above.



Step 6: Access VESL from your home screen. App will appear as shown above.

Downloading Your Trip Data



1. Click on "Find Trip" from your dashboard.



2. Enter your vessel number.

3. Choose a date range.

FILTERS

Vessel

Date Range

Status

ACTIONS

<input type="checkbox"/>	TRIP # ^	TRIP DATE & TIME ^^	TRIP END ^^	LAST MODIFIED ^^	STATUS
No Trips found for the set filters					
*All times are in Eastern Time					

4. If interested in all trips within date range, click this box. Otherwise click boxes to the left of specific trips needed.

5. Click "Download Selected Items." Click on Excel (if preferred) and click "OK."