

There is no single best practice that works to improve survival of released fish in every fishing situation. Remember these tips to give fish their best chance to survive release and support the future of the fishery.



Step 1: Preparing for a Fishing Trip

- Understand regulations, size limits, and target species
- Ensure the boat has the proper gear (heavy tackle, circle hooks, venting tools, descending devices, weights)
- Check out online training resources (e.g. ReturnEmRight.org)



Step 2: Choosing a Fishing Location

- Aim to catch your target species at shallower depths if possible
- Relocate if you are catching undersized fish, the wrong species, or if predators are eating your catch



Step 3: Fighting Fish

- Actively fish - do not fish from a rod holder
- Get fish to the surface as quickly as possible

Barotrauma Symptoms

- Protruding stomach
- Bulging eyes
- Bubbling scales
- Distended intestines
- Swollen belly

Step 4: Handling and Releasing Fish

- Handle fish with a net or lip grip and release the fish as quickly as possible if you do not plan to keep it
- Determine whether the fish is experiencing barotrauma
 - No → Dehook the fish over the water
 - Yes → Descend the fish when possible. Vent the fish when descending is not practical



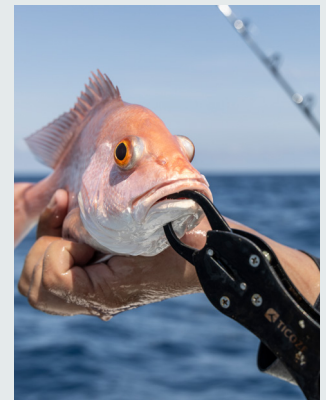
Dehook



Descend



Vent



Lip Grip

The fishing and scientific community worked together to develop a manual of best release practices. Scan the QR code to read the full manual.



BEST PRACTICES FOR HANDLING AND RELEASING FISH

The key to increasing survival is minimizing handling and air exposure by working quickly to release fish

Best Practices for Photographing Fish

- Take photos quickly and consider only taking pictures of fish you plan to keep
- Make sure the camera is ready prior to lifting the fish out of the water
- Minimize handling and contact by using a lip-grip device to secure the fish (not a lip gaff)
- Hold fish horizontally and support the belly



Fish is Reeled to Surface

Are you keeping the fish?

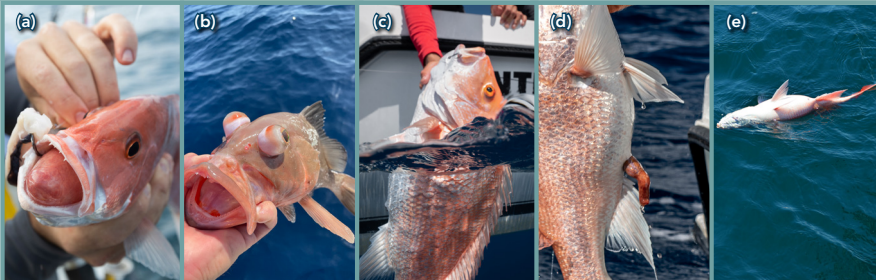
Bring the fish on board

Are you releasing the fish/not sure?

Use a net or lip grip to grab the fish (do not gaff it)



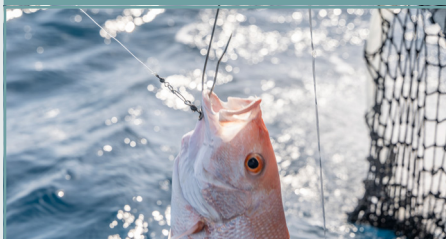
Is the fish showing signs of barotrauma?



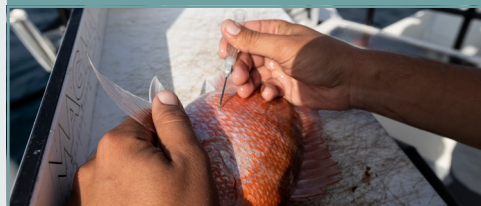
Barotrauma symptoms include: (a) protruding stomach, (b) bulging eyes, (c) bubbling scales, (d) distended intestines and (e) swollen belly

Yes

Use a descending device



Use a venting tool if descending isn't practical



No

Dehook fish using a dehooking device

