Evidence-based Communication Strategies for Improving Public Reporting of Sawfish Encounters

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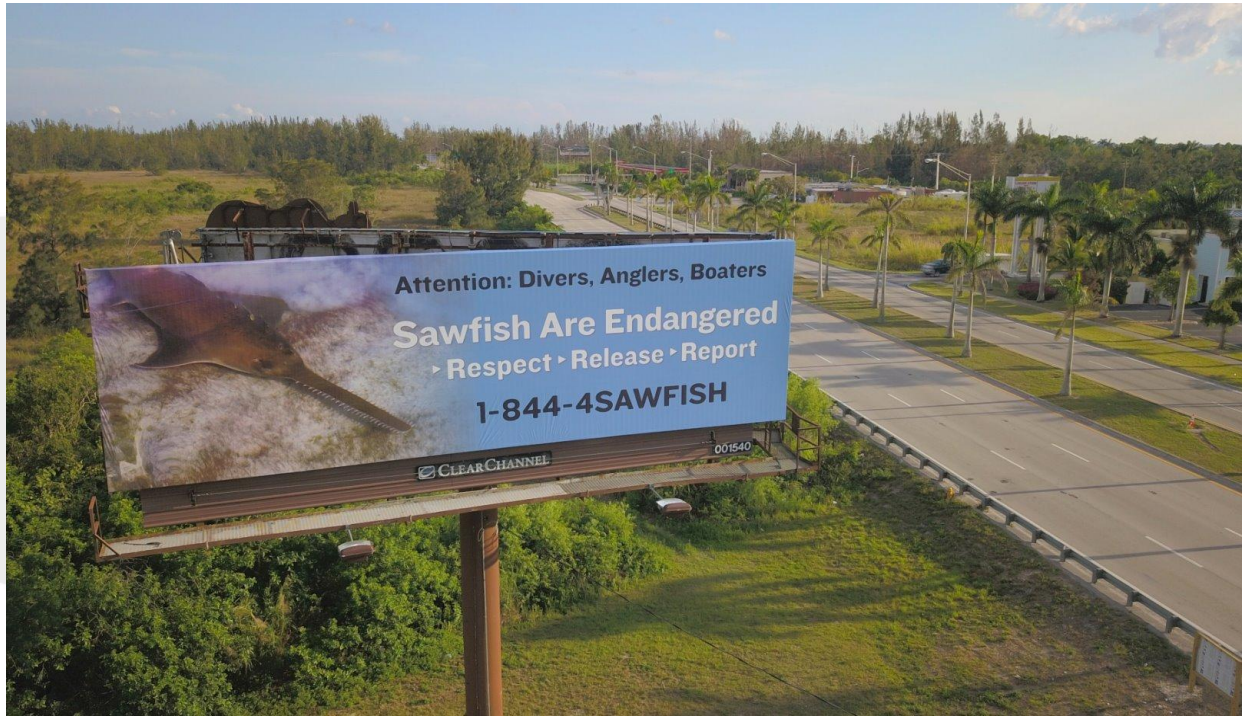
INTRODUCTION

- Smalltooth Sawfish listed Endangered in 2003
- Recovery depends on management actions, stakeholder support, and community participation
- Millions of licensed Florida anglers have potential for interactions with Smalltooth Sawfish
- Recent spinning and unusual mortality events highlight the need for effective outreach and communication
- Trusted messengers and clear procedures drive positive behaviors



METHODS

- Online survey
  - Designed in Qualtrics by WDW ASE Scientific Review Committee (#IR2005)
  - Approved by the Institutional Review Boards at Northeastern University and Disney Conservation Fund

- 4M+ licensed recreational anglers in Florida
  - Survey sent to 12,000
  - Likert-scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions
  - 25 questions total

RESULTS

256 Survey Responses

69% agreed that sawfish should be protected and conserved

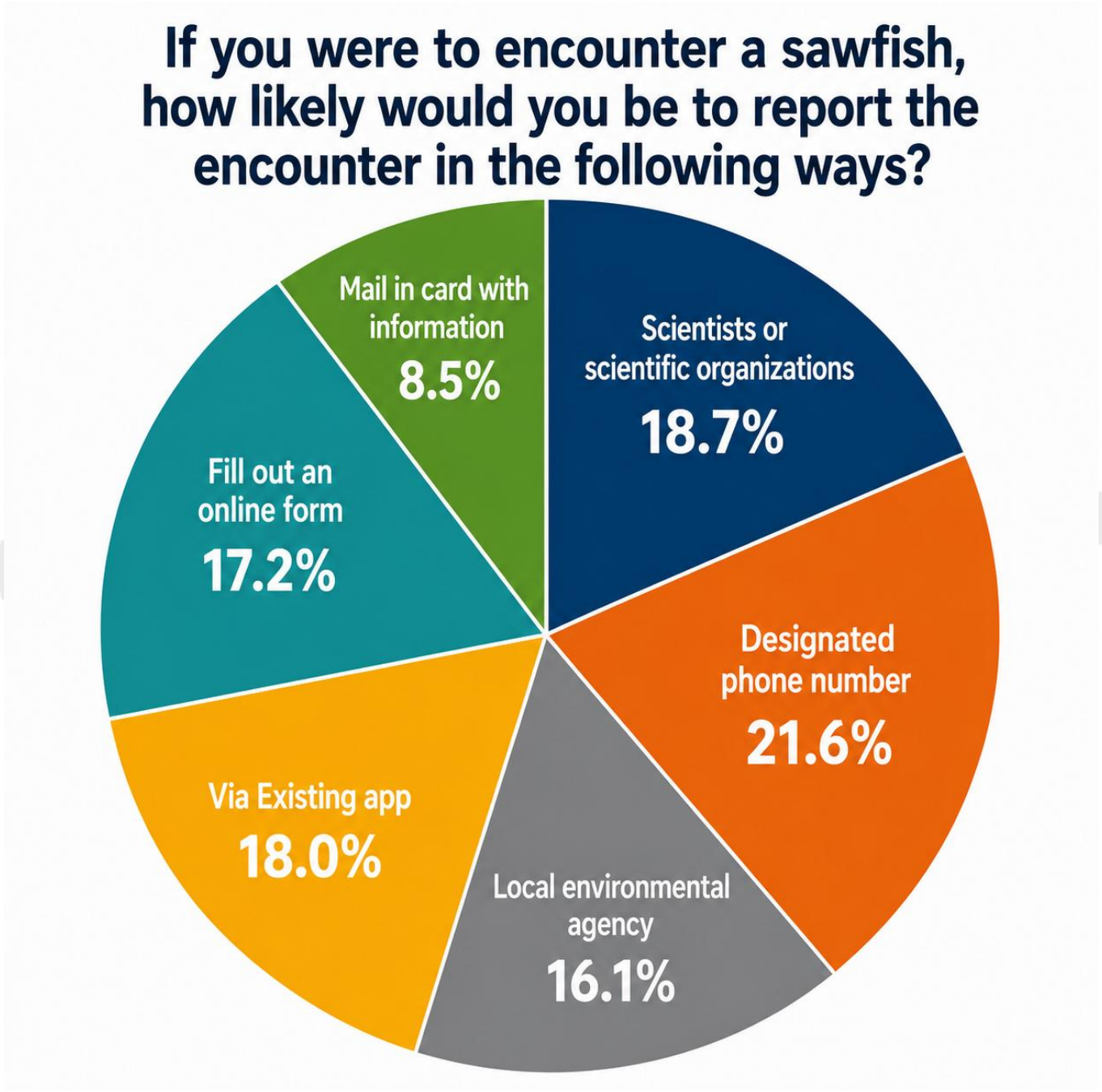
62% feel that the species plays an important role in the environment

75% were aware that sawfish are endangered

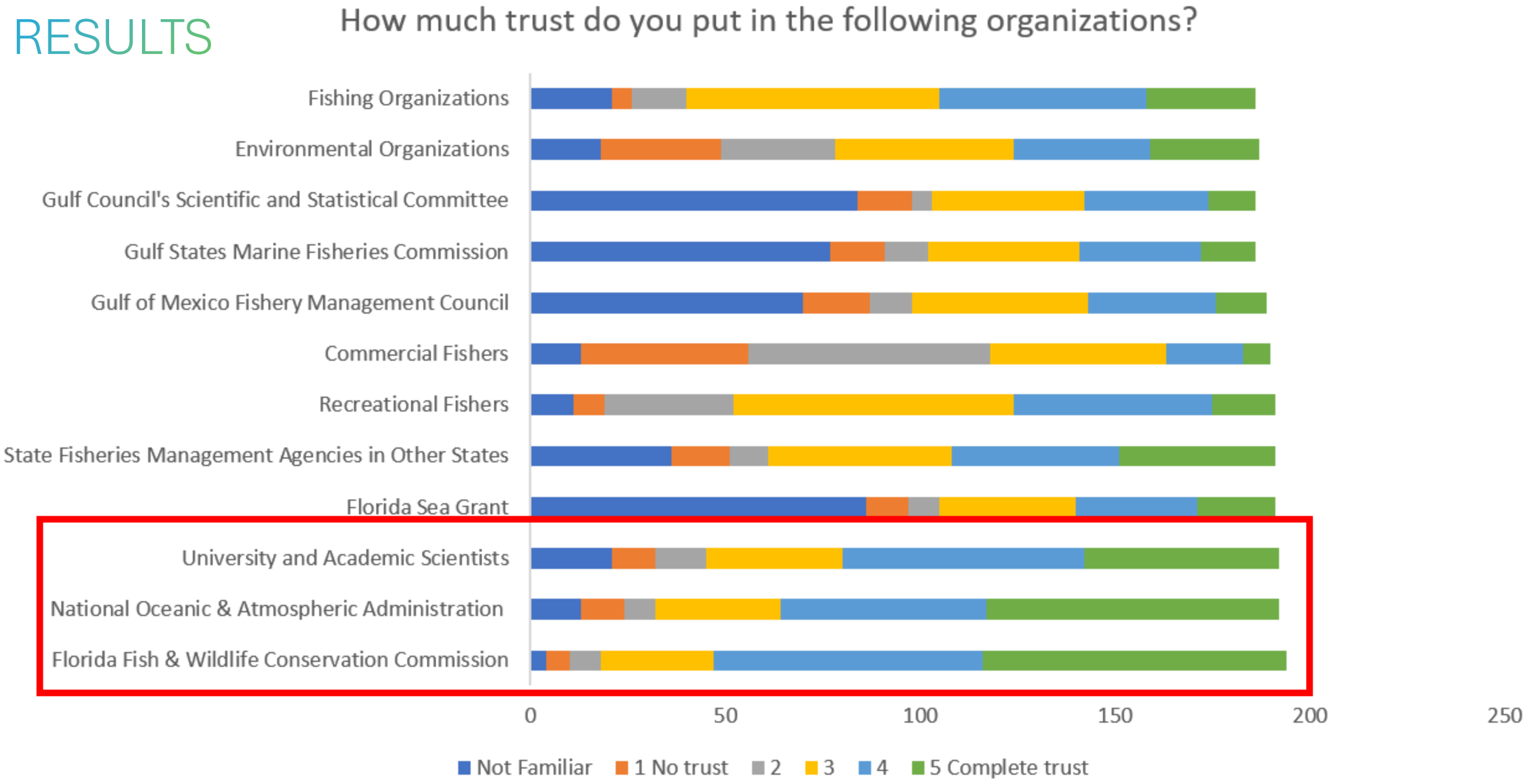
47% agreed that they could make a difference in sawfish recovery

73% would care if sawfish become extinct

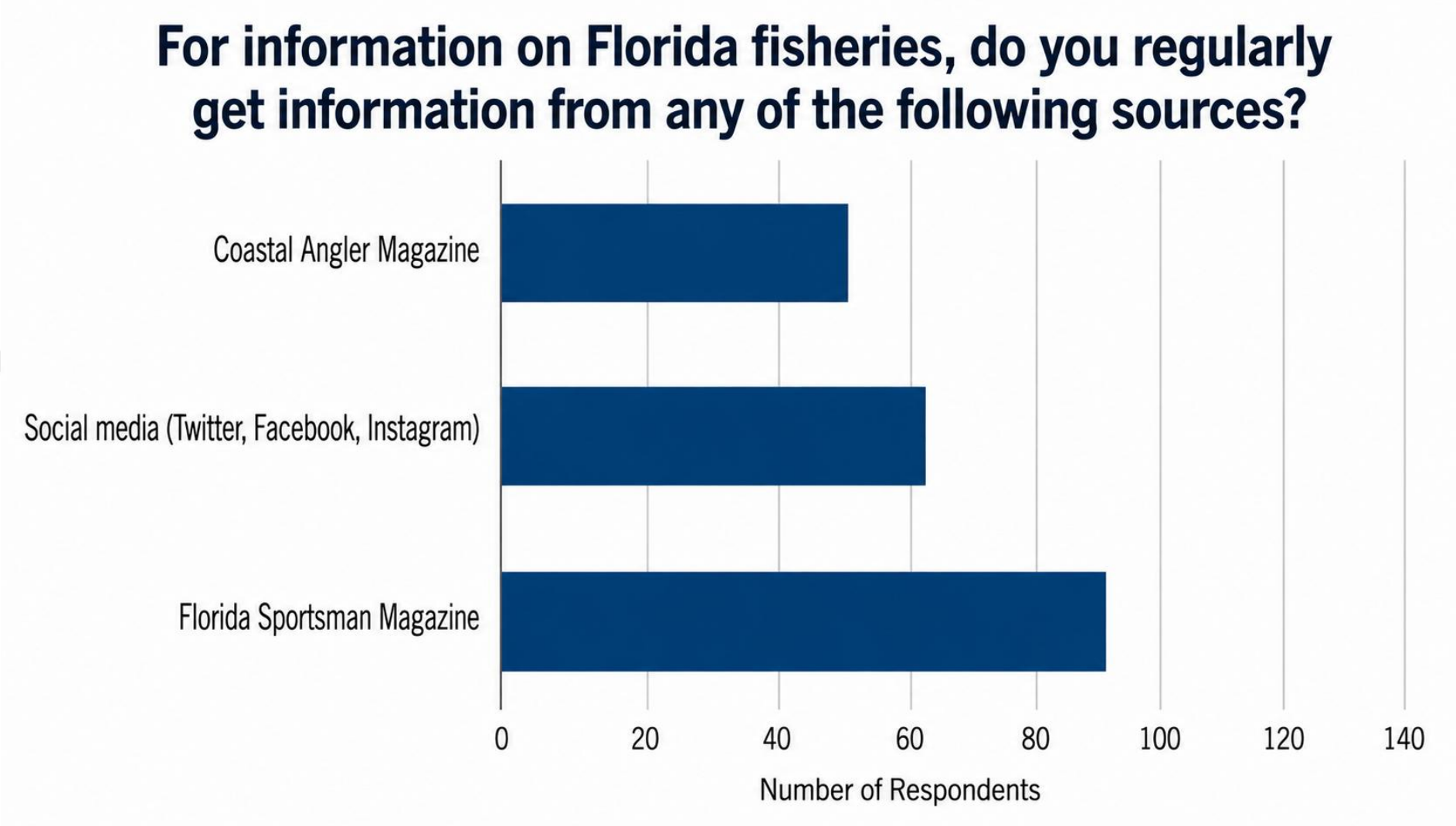
RESULTS


If you were to encounter a sawfish, how likely would you be to report the encounter in the following ways?
Mail in card with information
8.5%
Scientists or scientific organizations
18.7%
Fill out an online form
17.2%
Designated phone number
21.6%
Via Existing app
18.0%
Local environmental agency
16.1%

RESULTS


How much trust do you put in the following organizations?
Fishing Organizations
Environmental Organizations
Gulf Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Commercial Fishers
Recreational Fishers
State Fisheries Management Agencies in Other States
Florida Sea Grant
University and Academic Scientists
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
0
50
100
150
200
250
Not Familiar
1 No trust
2
3
4
5 Complete trust

Results


For information on Florida fisheries, do you regularly get information from any of the following sources?
Coastal Angler Magazine
Social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
Florida Sportsman Magazine
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
Number of Respondents

CONCLUSIONS

What's Working	Potential Improvements	Future Steps
Positive angler attitudes	Fill reporting knowledge gaps	Highlight phone number reporting
High willingness to report	Widespread regulation awareness	Expand outreach/social media
Trusted communication pathways	Dispel fear of repercussions	Use trusted agencies and organizations and methods to share important messaging

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Thank You Symposium Sponsors!

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All activities during the "spinning fish events" performed under the authority and guidelines of NOAA Fisheries Emergency Section 7 Consultation #SERO-2024-00402

Non-spinning-event research activities performed under authority of current ESA Section 10 permits Gregg Poulakis, Tonya Wiley, John Carlson, and Colin Simpfendorfer