

## Reporting Dead Goliath Grouper During Fish Kill Events



During red tides and other harmful algal blooms, and prolonged cold spell events, it is not uncommon to see dead goliath grouper floating at the surface or washed up on shore. While the sight and smell of these and other fish might not be pleasant to onlookers, their presence provides a unique opportunity for researchers who study them.

The harvest of goliath grouper has been prohibited in the United States since 1990. Because of their protected status, even researchers who study goliath cannot harvest the fish for scientific purposes. As a result, the need to collect even basic biological information from these fish is great.

By reporting any dead goliath grouper they see, citizens can play a vital role in helping researchers collect valuable data that might not be able to be obtained otherwise.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has a **Fish Kill Hotline** that they encourage citizens to use to report dead goliath grouper as well as any fish kills or diseased fish they observe. The Fish Kill Hotline can be reached at **1-800-636-0511** and it is monitored during regular business hours Monday through Friday. Citizens also have the option to leave a message during non-business hours or on the weekends, and staff will return all calls. Reports can also be submitted online at: <http://myfwc.com/FishKill>.

If you observe a dead goliath grouper, you are encouraged to immediately contact FWC's Fish Kill Hotline and provide the following information:



*Although this goliath grouper is badly decomposed, it can still provide valuable information to researchers. Citizens are encouraged to report any dead goliath grouper they observe by contacting the FWC Fish Kill Hotline.*

- An exact location so that FWC staff can find it for further sampling if needed
- A photo (if possible)
- An estimate of total length
- A contact number for whoever is reporting it, so staff can call if they have problems locating the dead individual

Because goliath grouper are protected species, citizens should not attempt to retain, or move any individuals they find. Fish kill hotline staff will notify the appropriate researchers, who can then mobilize staff to take samples from dead individuals if needed.

Reporting the exact location and size estimates of dead goliath grouper allows researchers to define the spatial extent of the population affected by the mortality event as well as the size and age distribution of fish killed. When possible, scientists may also be able to collect biological samples from individuals, which can also help them better understand the life history characteristics of the fish.

These data, in addition to all information collected during any fish kill event goes into a FWC Fish Kill Database. The information also allows researchers to better understand trends in fish mortality and identifies species that are sensitive to sporadic environmental events such as red tides and cold weather events.

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