



Lionfish Challenge 2023

Rules and Harvester Instructions



Outline

The Lionfish Challenge is a summer-long lionfish tournament open to participants from anywhere within the state of Florida. The tournament is completely free to enter and is open to participants of all ages. The goal of The Challenge is to encourage and reward recreational and commercial divers to remove lionfish from Florida waters.

The Challenge is split into two divisions to cater to both commercial and recreational divers. Participants in each division compete to harvest the most aggregate lionfish or most pounds of lionfish throughout the duration of the tournament. Prizes are awarded in tiers to encourage continued harvest even for those who cannot compete to win. The more lionfish you harvest, the more prizes you win! Grand prizes are awarded to the top 3 competitors in each division. Once you reach Tier 1, you are automatically entered into our monthly raffles.

Timeline

- June 1, 2023 through October 1, 2023
**All fish must be caught on or after June 1st and submissions must be received no later than 11:59 on October 1st to receive credit.

Registration

- Participants must register for the tournament at FWCReefRangers.com. You will be given a registration number upon successful completion- please keep this number for your records.
- Participants may only qualify for one category (recreational or commercial).
 - Participants with an active Saltwater Products License and commercial lionfish sales within the last year must register for the commercial category.

How to Submit Your Catch

Instructions for Commercial Divers:

- After harvesting your lionfish, sell them to a licensed wholesale dealer and get a copy of your trip ticket verifying the commercial sale. Contact us for a list of wholesale dealers currently purchasing lionfish.
- After obtaining your trip ticket, complete a Commercial Trip Ticket Submission.
 - Trip ticket submission is completed through an online form on our website (similar to the form you filled out when registering for the Challenge).

- On the online form you will fill out information about when and where your lionfish were harvested, and you will upload a copy of your trip ticket.
- You may submit either a photo, scanned copy, or online screen grab of your trip ticket.

Things to note:

- Please complete an online submission form for each trip ticket
- Only lionfish sales with species code 460 will be accepted.
- Lionfish sold with tails removed are NOT eligible for this competition. If we have reason to believe a participant is selling fish with tails previously removed, they will be disqualified from competing.

Instructions for Recreational Divers:

- After harvesting your lionfish, remove tails leaving a bit of meat attached and place in a plastic sandwich bag(s)
- Label bag(s) with harvester name, phone number, date of harvest and number of tails
- Bring tails and a tail verification form to a local Checkpoint for verification of harvest.
 - The Checkpoint will count your tails, sign your verification form, and return the form to you.
 - Checkpoints will keep the tails for our records.
 - Checkpoint locations and verification forms can be found on our website: www.FWCReefRangers.com
- After verifying your tails at a Checkpoint, you may complete a Recreational Tail Submission.
 - Tail submission is completed through an online form on our website (similar to the form you filled out when registering for the Challenge).
 - On the online form you will fill out information about when and where your lionfish were harvested, and you will upload a copy of your completed verification form.
 - You may submit either a photo or a scanned copy of your completed verification form.

Things to note:

- Please complete one verification form and one online submission form for each trip you take -- if you harvest lionfish 5 times throughout the tournament, please complete 5 verification forms and 5 online submissions.
- Please do not bring any smelly fish to your Checkpoint. Checkpoints have the right to deny any rotten or otherwise uncountable tails!
- Please keep all verification forms until the 2023 Lionfish Challenge has ended.

Prizes

Tiered Prizes

Prizes will be awarded in a tiered fashion- the more lionfish you submit, the more prizes you receive! The requirements for each tier are as follows (Note- more information on prizes will be announced later)

- Tier 1- Harvest 25 lionfish (recreational category) or 50 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category)
- Tier 2- Harvest 75 lionfish (recreational category) or 250 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category)
- Tier 3- Harvest 250 lionfish (recreational category) or 500 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category)
- Tier 4- Harvest 500 lionfish (recreational category) or 1000 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category)

Resource-based Incentives

Those who reach Tier 1 will be awarded a commemorative 2023 Lionfish Challenge Coin. This coin allows the harvester to retain 1 extra spiny lobster each day during the 2023 Sport Season (July 26th and 27th, 2023)

- Harvester **must** have 2023 commemorative coin in possession to harvest and possess extra spiny lobster.
- Only 1 coin may be used per harvester.
- Coins from previous years are not eligible for the 2023 Sport Season.

Raffle Prizes

Harvesters who reach Tier 1 before the raffle drawing date are automatically entered into the raffles.

- Harvesters can only win one raffle prize during the 2023 Lionfish Challenge.
- Raffle prizes will be announced as items are donated.
- Raffle drawing dates:
 - June 30th - 2 winners
 - July 28th - 4 winners
 - August 25th – 4 winners
 - September 22nd – 2 winners

Prize Mailing Dates

- June 19th
- July 5th
- July 17th
- July 31st
- August 14th
- August 28th

- September 11th
- September 25th
- October 9th

Grand Prizes

Grand prizes will be awarded to the top three competitors in each division.

- 1st place in each division (Commercial Champion or Lionfish King/Queen) will receive:
 - A custom lionfish trophy created by a Florida-based artist.
 - 1st pick at one of 3 grand prizes (grand prizes will be announced at a later date)
 - Recognition on Reef Ranger's website and social media platforms
- 2nd place in each division will receive:
 - 2nd pick at one of 3 grand prizes
- 3rd place in each division will receive:
 - 3rd pick at one of 3 grand prizes.
- Military Prize
 - An additional grand prize will be awarded to the top Active Military or Veteran competitor
 - Note: Any participant may only win one prize. If an individual is eligible for more than one prize, they will be awarded the prize of the highest value and the runner-up for that category will be awarded the remaining prize.

Fair Tournament Rules and Expectations:

- The FWC is aware that this competition has gotten extremely competitive over the past several years and we want to emphasize dive safety to all our participants. While removing lionfish is important, **no fish or prize is worth your life**. Reports of unsafe activity are taken very seriously, and if we have reason to believe a participant is acting unsafely or putting themselves in danger, that participant will be removed from the competition.
 - Stockpiling tails from fish harvested before the beginning of the tournament is grounds for immediate removal from the competition.
 - Any lionfish sold to a wholesale dealer with tails previously removed are not eligible for this competition. If we find out that you are competing as a recreational diver but still selling your lionfish harvest, or you are removing tails and giving them to your recreational friend to submit, all parties will be removed from the tournament.
- There will be a zero-tolerance policy this year for any participants suspected of diving unsafely or competing unfairly.