



# Lionfish Challenge 2024



## Rules and Harvester Instructions

### Outline

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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

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- May 24, 2024, through September 2, 2024  
\*\*All fish must be caught on or after May 24<sup>th</sup> and submissions must be received no later than 11:59pm on September 2<sup>nd</sup> to receive credit.

### Registration

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- Participants must register for the 2024 Florida Fish and Wildlife Lionfish Challenge tournament on Fishing Chaos. Directions to Fishing Chaos can be found at [FWCReefRangers.com](http://FWCReefRangers.com). You will need to create a free user account with a username and password.
- You may use Fishing Chaos on your browser or download the app via your app store.
- 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

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#### 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.
- After obtaining your trip ticket, you must complete an online submission.

- Go to [FWCReefRangers.com](http://FWCReefRangers.com) to find the link to submit your harvest. You will be directed to the 2024 Florida Fish and Wildlife Lionfish Challenge on Fishing Chaos.
- Click "Submit Catch"
- Input the pounds of fish harvested as documented on the trip ticket.
- Upload a photo of the trip ticket- you may submit either a photo, scanned copy, or online screen grab of your trip ticket.
- Please have your name on the trip ticket.

Things to note:

- Please complete an online submission 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](http://www.FWCReefRangers.com)
- After verifying your tails at a Checkpoint, you must complete an online submission.
  - Go to [FWCReefRangers.com](http://FWCReefRangers.com) to find the link to submit your harvest. You will be directed to the 2024 Florida Fish and Wildlife Lionfish Challenge on Fishing Chaos.
  - Click "Submit Catch"
  - Input the number of fish harvested as documented on the approved Tail Verification Form.
  - Upload a photo of the Tail Verification Form- you may submit either a photo, scanned copy, or online screen grab 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 2024 Lionfish Challenge has ended.

## Prizes

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### 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): **Dryfit Tournament Shirt & 2024 Challenge Coin**
- Tier 2- Harvest 75 lionfish (recreational category) or 100 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category): **Hammerhead pole spear, gloves, & hat**
- Tier 3- Harvest 150 lionfish (recreational category) or 200 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category): **Yukon Outfitters backpack drybag, Zookeeper heat pack, & StingMaster sting cream**
- Tier 4- Harvest 300 lionfish (recreational category) or 400 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category): **Dive Rite dive light, Dexter filet knife, & 36oz Yeti bottle**
- Tier 5- Harvest 600 lionfish (recreational category) or 800 lbs. of lionfish (commercial category): **Turtlebox speaker**

### Resource-based Incentives

Those who reach Tier 1 will be awarded a commemorative 2024 Lionfish Challenge Coin. This coin allows the harvester to retain 1 extra spiny lobster each day during the 2024 Sport Season (July 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024)

- Harvester **must** have a 2024 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 2024 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 2024 Lionfish Challenge.
- Raffle prizes will be announced as items are donated.
- Raffle drawing dates:
  - June 28<sup>th</sup>
  - July 26<sup>th</sup>
  - August 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - September 3<sup>rd</sup>

## Prize Mailing Dates

- July 1<sup>st</sup>
- July 15<sup>th</sup>
- July 29<sup>th</sup>
- August 12<sup>th</sup>
- August 26<sup>th</sup>
- September 9<sup>th</sup>

## Grand Prizes

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

- 1<sup>st</sup> place in each division (Commercial Champion or Lionfish King/Queen) will receive:
  - A custom lionfish trophy created by a Florida-based artist.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> 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
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place in each division will receive:
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> pick at one of 3 grand prizes
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place in each division will receive:
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> pick at one of 3 grand prizes.

## Fair Tournament Rules and Expectations:

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- 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.
- This is an individual tournament and submissions should reflect such.
- 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.