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Suggested Tweet: Get rewarded this Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day May 14 and beyond: [\[\[VIEW_THIS_URL\]\]](#) #Florida #fishing #FWCLionfish

Toolkit: ReefRangers.com/faq/media/

Events and rewards programs mark Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day 2016

Join the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in celebrating the second annual Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day (Saturday, May 14) by attending one of many exciting events across the state including a festival and tournament in Pensacola or by participating in one of two new lionfish removal programs, the Lionfish Challenge and the Panhandle Pilot Program.

Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day (the first Saturday after Mother's Day each year) raises awareness about lionfish, a nonnative, invasive species that have a potential negative impact on native species and habitat.

Learn more about one of the many upcoming lionfish removal events and opportunities below.

Pensacola Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day Festival and Tournament

The second annual Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day Festival will be from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. May 14-15 at Plaza de Luna, 900 S. Palafox St., Pensacola.

This event will include celebrity chef and fillet demonstrations, lionfish tastings, family-friendly activities such as games and a fountain to play in, and more than 40 art, diving and conservation vendors.

To participate in the tournament, visit the Gulf Coast Lionfish Coalition webpage at Gulfcoastlionfish.com/lionfish_events.

Help Costa [Kick Plastic](#) by bringing a plastic water bottle for recycling and receive a metal bottle in return. Learn more at CostaDelMar.com/inside-costa/kick-plastic.

Check out the booths of our many sponsors including Guy Harvey Magazine, iHeartMedia, Coast Watch Alliance, Edible Invaders, Visit Pensacola, Escambia County Division of Marine Resources, Florida Sea Grant, the City of Pensacola and tournament host Gulf Coast Lionfish Coalition.

Statewide lionfish events

Can't make the Pensacola festival and tournament? [Find an event near you](#) at ReefRangers.com/Event-Info/Statewide-Events

- Lion Tamer Dive Tournament – Panama City Beach
- Sebastian Lionfish Fest – Sebastian
- REEF Lionfish Event – Key Largo
- Northeast Florida Lionfish Blast – Jacksonville
- FSDA Lionfish Calcutta – near St. Petersburg
- FWC Exotic Pet Amnesty Day – Kissimmee

[Look for event updates](#) at MyFWC.com/Lionfish by clicking on “Lionfish Derbies and Events.”

Lionfish Challenge

Remove 50 or more lionfish between Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day (May 14, 2016) and the end of September and get entered in the FWC's Lionfish Challenge.

Rewards include:

- a commemorative coin to mark membership;

- an event T-shirt;
- Lionfish Hall of Fame recognition on the MyFWC.com website;
- be entered in drawings to win prizes including fishing licenses, lionfish harvesting equipment, fuel cards and dive tank refills;
- if qualified before the relevant harvest season starts, the opportunity to take an additional spiny lobster per day during the 2016 mini-season (July 27-28);
- and, the person who “checks in” the most lionfish will be crowned Florida’s Lionfish King or Queen and will receive a lifetime saltwater fishing license, have his or her photograph featured on the cover of the FWC’s January 2017 Saltwater Regulations publication, be prominently featured on MyFWC.com’s Lionfish Hall of Fame, and be recognized at the November 2016 FWC Commission meeting.

To enter the program, email photos of your first 50 qualifying lionfish to Lionfish@MyFWC.com. Be sure to include the name of the harvester, the date harvested and your signature in the photo (written on a piece of paper next to the fish for example) and your mailing address in the email. To qualify for additional prizes and a chance to win Lionfish King or Queen, bring the tails of any lionfish harvested in excess of the initial 50 to an FWC approved checkpoint (list coming soon to MyFWC.com/Lionfish by clicking on “[Lionfish Challenge and Panhandle Pilot Program](#)”).

Panhandle Pilot Program

The Panhandle Pilot Program will focus on lionfish removal efforts off Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf and Franklin counties, where lionfish can be

found in high densities. For every 100 lionfish checked in from this seven-county region between May 2016 and May 2017, the harvester will be eligible to receive a tag allowing them to take either a legal-sized red grouper or a legal-sized cobia that is over the bag limit from state waters. The state will issue a total of 100 red grouper and 30 cobia tags in total to successful participants in the pilot program. In addition, the first 10 persons or groups that check in 500 or more lionfish during this one-year period will be given the opportunity to name an artificial reef.

To qualify for this program, tails of any lionfish harvested must be brought to an approved FWC checkpoint (list coming soon to MyFWC.com/Lionfish by clicking on "[Lionfish Challenge and Panhandle Pilot Program](#)").

Questions?

Contact the FWC Division of Marine Fisheries Management at 850-487-0554. For more on [FWC's Pet Amnesty Day](#), or if you have an exotic pet and need help finding it a new home, visit MyFWC.com/WildlifeHabitats and click on "Nonnative Species" and "Exotic Pet Amnesty Program."

Links

Facebook:

- [Facebook.com/lionfishreefrangers](https://www.facebook.com/lionfishreefrangers)
- [Facebook.com/gulfcoastlionfishcoalition](https://www.facebook.com/gulfcoastlionfishcoalition)

Website:

- Reefrangers.com
- MyFWC.com/Lionfish

Photos: Flickr: [Flickr.com/photos/myfwcmedia/albums/72157631003581858](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myfwcmedia/albums/72157631003581858)

Promotional Video: YouTube: [YouTube.com/watch?v=1uQCF4dikW0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uQCF4dikW0)

Video available for download on Vimeo at: [Vimeo.com/165317213](https://vimeo.com/165317213)

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