



PETIT BATEAU FIELD GUIDE

The Fort Lauderdale Spearfishing Playbook

A practical season map for clearer decisions, safer breath-hold diving, selective harvest and better days on the reef.

PETIT BATEAU
Your ocean. Your way.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

THE 30-SECOND PLAN

Build the day around the water—not the calendar.

Fort Lauderdale is a year-round fishery. The winning variable is not the month; it is the combination of current, visibility, wind, traffic and a disciplined buddy team.

1

Check the legal map

Confirm the species page, size and bag limits, season, legal gear, state/federal boundary and any managed-area closure.

2

Read the surface

Wind direction, period, swell, lightning risk, inlet outflow and recent rain tell you whether the water may be comfortable—or ugly.

3

Read the current

Plan a drift, not a wrestling match. Current can change quickly under Gulf Stream influence.

4

Assign buddies

One diver down, one active safety up. Say the route, depth, turn pressure and abort signal out loud.

GO / NO-GO

Call the dive early.

No fish is worth a confused buddy pair, unexpected boat traffic, deteriorating weather, poor visibility or a current the team cannot manage.

THE RULE UNDERNEATH EVERY RULE

If your safety diver is not actively watching your ascent and recovery, you are functionally diving alone.

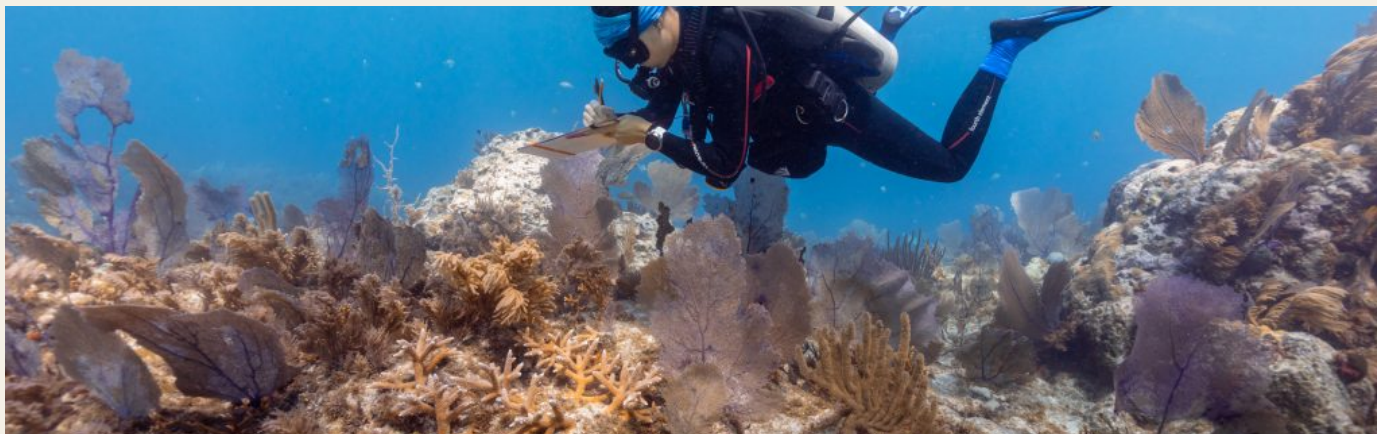
PLANNING ANCHOR

- ✓ Lobster sport season: July 28–29
- ✓ Regular lobster season: August 6–March 31
- ✓ Regulations may change—verify before every trip

Calm confidence beats performance. The best divers make conservative decisions look ordinary.

READ THE WATER

Five signals tell you almost everything.

**01 • WIND**

Direction matters as much as speed. Offshore wind may flatten the beach while complicating the return. Onshore wind can build chop and stir the shallows.

02 • CURRENT

Treat it as a route planner. Enter up-current, keep a conservative reserve and avoid fighting water you could have planned around.

03 • VISIBILITY

Never assume yesterday repeats. Wind, rain, plankton and inlet discharge can change clarity dramatically.

04 • HEAT & STORMS

Summer mornings are the cleanest planning window. Heat load and afternoon thunderstorms reward early starts and short surface exposure.

05 • TRAFFIC

Traffic is a first-class hazard. Display the flag correctly, stay close to it and surface predictably beside your safety diver.

LOCAL TEXTURE

The second reef is commonly described around 20–30 feet, but visibility and current can vary significantly. That makes it inviting—not automatic.

Temperature planning: expect roughly low/mid-70s °F in winter and low/mid-80s °F in summer; choose exposure protection for your own tolerance and session length, not pride.

Planning ranges are not forecasts. Check same-day marine weather, tide/current information and local observations.

FIRST HALF

Cool fronts to blue-water mornings.

Use this as a scouting rhythm—not a promise of conditions or catch. Species rules, closures and federal boundaries still govern every decision.

JANUARY

Structure after the front

Cooler water, variable wind and cleaner windows between fronts. Work protected plans and watch current.

Scout: ledges · snapper mix

FEBRUARY

Patience over mileage

Front timing still rules. Favor low-drag entries and short, repeatable drops over long surface swims.

Scout: reef fish · lobster habitat

MARCH

Transition water

Warmer spells begin; wind can remain unsettled. Regular lobster season ends March 31.

Scout: reef edges · lobster

APRIL

Reset the target board

Lobster is closed. Build identification discipline and review each species page before loading gear.

Scout: snapper · triggerfish

MAY

Longer, warmer windows

Late spring often brings attractive reef conditions. Thermal stress and traffic start climbing.

Scout: reefs · current edges

JUNE

Start early, watch the sky

Warm water, strong sun and storm risk. Offshore debris lines can hold mahi—but distance multiplies risk.

Scout: mahi · reef fish

MONTHLY HABIT

Before each trip, choose one primary target and one legal fallback. That single decision reduces rushed identification, wasted drops and questionable shots.

SECOND HALF

Heat, lobster energy and the storm-season filter.

JULY

Prepare, then slow down

Sport season is July 28–29. Crowds and urgency are hazards; your measuring routine should already be automatic.

Scout: lobster · reef fish

AUGUST

Regular season opens

Regular lobster season opens August 6. Warm water and early starts reward efficient, selective teams.

Scout: lobster · mahi offshore

SEPTEMBER

Weather owns the plan

Storms, rainfall and surge can change visibility fast. Build cancellation into the plan, not into an argument.

Scout: lobster · resilient reef plan

OCTOBER

Transition and reset

Heat begins to ease. Recheck gear, bands, floatline and first-aid supplies after the hard summer cycle.

Scout: lobster · reef edges

NOVEMBER

Front discipline returns

Weather windows narrow. Use the protected plan first; expand only when the water earns it.

Scout: reef fish · lobster

DECEMBER

Clean execution

Cooler water can extend comfort for some divers and shorten it for others. Exposure protection is personal.

Scout: structure · lobster

A calendar tells you what to prepare for. The surface tells you whether to get in.

NEVER CHASE A DATE

If the conditions, boat traffic or buddy coverage are wrong, shift the plan—or stay dry.

NEVER CHASE A SPECIES

A sighting is not permission. Confirm identity, size, season, bag limit, area and legal gear before the shot.

TARGET BOARD

Know it before you load it.

The local reef is diverse. The disciplined diver identifies first, checks the whole rule, and passes whenever doubt remains.

**Mahi-mahi · Atlantic**

Verified snapshot: 20-inch fork length minimum; 5 per person, 30 per vessel for private recreational fishing; spearing listed as legal gear. Recheck the live FWC page.

**Gray triggerfish · Atlantic state waters**

Verified snapshot: 12-inch fork length; 10 per person; open year-round; spears and gigs listed as legal gear. Federal and aggregate rules can differ.

**Reef snapper & hogfish**

Valuable—and easy to mishandle legally because species, zones, seasons and sizes differ. Make exact identification part of the hunt.

**Lionfish**

Invasive, but still demands deliberate handling: venomous spines remain dangerous after harvest. Use a dedicated containment method.

THE FIVE-SECOND SHOT TEST**1 · ID**

Exact species, not “close enough.”

2 · Legal

Area, season, size, bag and gear.

3 · Clean

Confident placement and recovery.

Rule snapshots were checked for this edition. They are not a substitute for same-day FWC and federal verification.

FLORIDA SPINY LOBSTER

Measure in the water. Keep it whole.



SPORT SEASON

July 28–29

Outside Monroe County and Biscayne National Park: 12 per person per day.

REGULAR SEASON

Aug 6–Mar 31

6 per person per day.

SIZE

Larger than 3 in

Carapace length. Measure in the water. Possess and use a measuring device.

- ✓ Carry the required saltwater fishing license and lobster permit unless exempt.
- ✓ Land lobster whole; no tail separation in state waters.
- ✓ Release every egg-bearing lobster immediately.
- ✓ Never use anything that punctures, penetrates or crushes the shell or flesh.
- ✓ No recreational trapping.
- ✓ Each properly licensed, actively harvesting person keeps only their own bag limit.

The clean routine: spot → coax → net/hand capture → measure underwater → inspect for eggs → bag or release.

CROWD DISCIPLINE

Sport season compresses more divers and boats into the same water. Keep spacing, communicate routes and avoid reaching into a hole another team is working.

AREA DISCIPLINE

Protected areas and special rules exist. Confirm the map before launch; do not infer legality from another boat's presence.

FWC rules can change. Verify again before your trip.

TAKE LESS. CLOSE EVERY FAILURE MODE.

The kit that earns its space.

SYSTEM	MINIMUM	WHY IT EXISTS
Breath-hold	Mask, snorkel, fins, exposure protection	Comfort and efficiency preserve judgment. Fit matters more than novelty.
Weighting	Belt with quick release; conservative ballast	Overweighting increases blackout and rescue risk. Test buoyancy with your actual suit.
Visibility	Legal divers-down flag or buoy, floatline	Makes the team visible and creates a predictable operating center.
Harvest	Species-appropriate legal tool, stringer/container, knife	Clean recovery, controlled handling and an escape tool for entanglement.
Lobster	Gauge, legal net/hand capture setup, gloves, bag	Measure underwater; handle without puncturing or crushing.
Navigation	Compass/GPS plan, watch, surface reference	Current can turn a familiar reef into a long swim.
Emergency	VHF/phone protection, first-aid kit, drinking water	Communication, bleeding control and heat management.

BOAT KIT

- ✓ Correctly displayed vessel dive flag
- ✓ Throwable flotation and required PFDs
- ✓ Emergency oxygen when trained to use it
- ✓ Named emergency lead and nearest appropriate facility

DELETE FROM THE PLAN

- ✗ Unknown bands, frayed line or sticky release
- ✗ A float no one is actively tending
- ✗ A second gun before the first is mastered
- ✗ "We'll figure it out in the water"

Pre-water test: mask seals, snorkel clears, belt releases, gun is safe, flag is unfurled, comms work, everyone knows the abort signal.

NO SOLO HEROICS

Your buddy is a job, not a passenger.



1 One down, one up
The surface safety watches the diver—not the horizon, not the gun, not a camera.

2 Meet the ascent
Track the final part of the ascent and stay close through the surface recovery.

3 Protect the airway
Know the signs of loss of motor control and blackout. Train rescue; do not improvise it.

NEVER

- × Dive alone
- × Hyperventilate
- × Push a time or depth target while hunting
- × Continue after loss of motor control or blackout
- × Let both buddies descend together

DAN'S BLUNT POINT

Freediving blackouts can happen in any body of water. Recreational incidents are often associated with overexertion, overweighting and inadequate supervision.

BEFORE

Five-minute dry brief. Buddy pairs. Route. Planned depth/time. Emergency roles. Communication method.

DURING

Active observation. Conservative surface intervals. Stop on weather, current, fatigue, anxiety or confusion.

AFTER

Count divers. Hydrate. Debrief any near-miss. If an incident occurred, treat it as data—not ego.

No checklist replaces in-person freediving certification and rescue practice with a qualified instructor.

LEAVE THE REEF WORKING

Take the memory. Earn the harvest.

REEF CODE

- ✓ Do not stand on, kick, grab or drag gear across coral.
- ✓ Control the shaft, line and catch before entering tight structure.
- ✓ Take only legal fish you will use—and pass on marginal shots.
- ✓ Give turtles, rays, sharks and resting animals space.
- ✓ Pack out line, tabs, packaging and every loose item.
- ✓ Respect other teams' working area and approach.

DIVERS-DOWN DISTANCES

Stay within **300 ft** of the flag in open water and **100 ft** in rivers, inlets or navigation channels. Boaters must idle within those distances.

Water display: minimum 12×12 in. Vessel display: minimum 20×24 in, at the highest point and fully unfurled.



The reef is not scenery. It is the system that makes the day possible.

FOUNDING MEMBERSHIP

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aboard
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Bateau.

\$20 / month
or \$199 / year

Guided spearfishing days, a dedicated group boat, priority booking when reservations open, and a founding voice in the experiences we run.

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SOURCES & LIVE-RULE CHECKS

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission — Spiny Lobster: <https://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/lobster/>

FWC — Divers-down flags: <https://MYFWC.COM/news/all-news/divers-down-flag-724/>

FWC — Do I need a license?: https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/do-i-need-one/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=campaign

FWC — Dolphinfinch: https://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/dolphinfinch/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=campaign

FWC — Gray Triggerfish: https://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/triggerfish/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=campaign

Divers Alert Network — Freediving Risk Assessments: <https://dan.org/alert-diver/article/freediving-risk-assessments/> · Shallow-Water Blackout: <https://dan.org/alert-diver/article/shallow-water-blackout/>

Local condition context: <https://www.florida-scubadiving.com/second-reef-line-fort-lauderdale-diving-tips/>

Photo sources: Azur Freediving, Reef Resilience Network, All Star Liveboards and WallpaperAccess.

Educational guide, not legal or medical advice. Rules, closures and conditions can change. Verify current state and federal regulations before every trip.