2027 SFUPS CONTEST SUBJECTS

	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
JAN	**CLOSE FOCUS WIDE ANGLE** – WIDE ANGLE – A creative close focus wide angle (CFWA) image of a marine critter or mammal in its natural environment. The animal must be the dominant subject and photographed close enough to create dramatic perspective and a sense of scale. The background must be complementary and provide environmental context. This could be the reef, substrate, or surface reflection. Solid, plain blue or black backgrounds are not permitted. **Submission deadline: January 2nd**	**POSITIVELY NEGATIVE** – MACRO – Isolate your subject from its background by utilizing the negative space around it, by day or night. Think of shooting up, snooting, directional lighting, or even dark subjects against a high-key light background. No artificial backgrounds. Any living macro subject is permissible as the subject. **Submission deadline: January 2nd**
	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	**VIDEO**
	GET CLOSER – One of the secrets to great underwater photography is getting closer to your subject. Water absorbs color and reduces contrast and clarity, so the less water between your camera and the subject, the better your photographs are likely to look. Rather than zooming in from a distance, try moving slowly and carefully towards your subject. Get close enough to capture its colors, textures and interesting details, while always respecting marine life and its environment. If you are using a TG camera, take advantage of its excellent close-focusing and microscope capabilities. **Submission deadline: January 2nd**	**UNDERWATER ANTICS** – ANY LENS – Celebrate the funniest, quirkiest, and most unexpected moments beneath the surface in a video short. Capture your best underwater antics - whether it's playful marine life, quirky creatures, or unusual interactions. No human subjects. **15 seconds maximum.** **Submission deadline: January 2nd**

	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
FEB	**UNDERWATER GARDEN** – ANY LENS – Submit a creative image depicting an underwater garden scene, with aquatic or semi-aquatic plant life as the main subject. This might include groupings of mangroves, tree roots, seagrass, lilies, aquatic grasses, or submerged flowers. Algae, corals, and anemones are not eligible. Creative techniques such as split shots or Snell's window are encouraged. **Submission deadline: January 30th**	**FLORIDA SPRINGS** – ANY LENS – Create an image that depicts a subject characteristic of the Florida springs, for example, manatees, turtles, freshwater fish, plants, cave formations, or smaller shrimp or molluscs. **Deadline: January 30th**

	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	VIDEO
	FRESHWATER – Create an image of any freshwater environment and the underwater subjects that can be found there. Freshwater environments might include the Florida Springs, lakes, river, or cenotes. Subjects might include manatees, turtles, fish, molluscs, and plant life. **Deadline: January 30th**	**IN THE GRASS** – ANY LENS – Create a video that shows the variety of life in seagrass beds. This might include larger grazing animals like turtles and manatees, stingrays and sharks, but also characteristic macro life. The subject must be seagrass and the life it sustains, not algae species that occur at Blue Heron Bridge, for example. **30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: January 30th**

MAR	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	PANORAMA – WIDE ANGLE – Stitch together a panoramic image of a large scene to tell a full story. Both Lightroom and Photoshop have tools that will merge a series of images into a panorama. We suggest taking at least 3-5 overlapping images, rotating from a fixed position while maintaining a consistent camera height and angle. Avoid fast-moving subjects. Be mindful of our rules about AI generation in this category. **Deadline: February 27th**	**BRIDGE LIFE** – ANY LENS – WIth the threat to BHB on our minds, show us your best shot of your favorite subject or underwater environment within the park, with the intent to demonstrate what makes it so special. Particularly focus on those threatened species that make the bridge their home. **Deadline: February 27th**
	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	**VIDEO**
	MUCK DIVING – Submit a photo of any creature found in a sandy, silty, or muddy underwater environment anywhere in the world. This might include nudibranch, frogfish, seahorse, and shrimp. **Deadline: February 27th**	**TIME TO ACT** – ANY LENS – Make a video that outlines a specific conservation issue affecting the underwater environment, grabs the viewer's attention, and inspires people to act - in only 60 seconds. Voiceovers permitted. **1 minute maximum. Deadline: February 27th**

APR	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	REEF SILHOUETTE – WIDE ANGLE – Use selective lighting - such as inward lighting or a snoot - to light only a portion of the reef and allow the remaining reef line to be a black silhouette in the background. Ideally, the reef line will be framed against a rich blue background. The reef should be the main subject, not an animal. **Deadline: April 3rd**	**SEA FAN HEAVEN** – ANY LENS – Submit a creative image of one or more sea fans. The image may include small inhabitants but should not represent them as the main subject. No larger reef inhabitants (e.g. turtles, sharks, rays) allowed. May include slow shutter or other creative techniques. **Deadline: April 3rd**

	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	VIDEO
	REEF SCENE – A vibrant image of a reef scene and its inhabitants. Wide angle attachments are encouraged. Use strobes or video lights to bring out the colors in your scene. **Deadline: April 3rd**	**BIG STORY** – WIDE ANGLE – Capture a wide-angle underwater scene that tells a bigger story. Showcase the environment, marine life, and their interactions to create a compelling visual narrative. Make use of ambient light, color grading (if accessible), and smooth movements to enhance your story. **1 minute maximum. Deadline: April 3rd**

MAY	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	RAW MATERIAL – ANY LENS – It is so tempting to try and perfect our images using object and spot removal, masking, Backscatter Exterminator, and other tools. We want you to go back to basics and submit an image shot with artificial light with only minor global adjustments. No more than a 10% crop. You may submit your jpg file as usual, but in order for your image to qualify, you must also send the raw file to contests@sfups.org. **Deadline: May 1st**	**NATURAL LIGHT** – ANY LENS – Dial in your settings to make the most of ambient light in your shot (no strobes or video lights allowed). This might include creating the perfect blue background, using strong sunlight in the shallows to light and reveal the color of your subject, or creating contrast with light rays and shadows. Look for opportunities to use the natural light to create depth, mood, texture, and drama in your image. **Deadline: May 1st**
	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	**VIDEO**
	COLOR POP – Create an image of any colorful macro subject that creates strong contrast with its background. The background may be a bright contrasting color, black, or even a colorful artificial background. Subjects might include nudibranch, mandarin fish, angelfish, or colorful shrimp. **Deadline: May 1st**	**LIGHT PLAY** – ANY LENS – Make the interaction of light and water the subject of your video. Capture the interplay of sunlight, artificial light, shadows, silhouettes, light rays, and darkness with water and the underwater subjects that exist within it. **30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: May 1st**

JUN	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	SPIRALLING – ANY LENS – Create an image that depicts a naturally-occurring spiral form or creates a spiral effect. This may include subjects such as snails or siphonophores, or spirals created by motion blur, magic tubes, filters, the motion of your subject, or lighting. **Deadline: May 29th.**	**CIRCLES** – ANY LENS – Create an image that incorporates circles as an important part of your composition. This could include background bokeh, a diver's bubbles, or round subjects such as sea urchins or jellyfish. A circular fisheye shot is also admissible. **Deadline: May 29th**

	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	VIDEO
	PATTERNS AND TEXTURES – Create an image of an abstract repeating geometric pattern or texture. This could be fish scales, coral polyps, or nurse shark skin, for example. Fill the frame with your pattern or texture. **Deadline: May 29th**	**THE ART OF MOVEMENT** – ANY LENS – Capture the beauty, character, and elegance of movement beneath the surface. Whether graceful, powerful, delicate, or unexpected, showcase the distinctive ways your subjects move through their underwater world. Let movement itself become the story. **30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: May 29th**

JUL	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	OCEAN EYES – MACRO – Create a macro portrait of a marine animal with a very shallow depth of field, both eyes in sharp focus, and a bright, creamy, bokeh background. No black, dark, blue, or artificial backgrounds in any part of the frame. **Deadline: July 3rd**	**MACRO WHIMSY** – MACRO – A macro portrait of a fish that is impossible not to love. Focus on eye contact and capturing the "expressions" that make them so endearing (this is not a behavior or action shot). Ideal subjects are blennies, small angel or butterfly fish, clownfish, and seahorses. **Deadline: July 3rd**
	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	**VIDEO**
	PORTRAITS – An image of any underwater animal posing for the camera. Try to create a connection between the subject and the viewer. **Deadline: July 3rd**	**TINY WORLDS** – MACRO – Use macro video to showcase the beauty, character, behavior, and intricate details of small underwater subjects within their habitat. **30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: July 3rd**

AUG	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	BUILT TO SURVIVE – ANY LENS – Use creative lighting to highlight a physical adaptation that helps an underwater animal survive, e.g. unusual appendages, armor, teeth, camouflage structures, eyes, feeding apparatus, etc. This should not be an anatomical portrait, but a creative composition that accentuates these characteristic features. **Deadline: July 31st**	**MASTERS OF DISGUISE** – ANY LENS – Create an image that shows any subject that is an expert at concealing itself in the sand demonstrating this camouflaging behavior. This can include rays disturbing the sand as they emerge from it, gobies, flounders, stargazers, and bobbit worms. Try not to blow out the sand by raising the strobes in rabbit ear position. **Deadline: July 31st**

	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	VIDEO
	CURIOUS CREATURES – Create an image of any weird, wonderful, or downright bizarre underwater creature. This could be an unusual shape, an unexpected behavior, incredible camouflage or a quirky personality. **Deadline: July 31st**	**STILLNESS** – ANY LENS – Create an atmospheric video that conveys a sense of stillness beneath the surface. Use timing, composition, light, rhythm, music, and subtle movement to immerse the viewer in the moment. **30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: July 31st**

SEPT	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	MACRO SUBJECT ON A WRECK – ANY LENS – Nudis and blennies often find refuge on our wrecks. Shoot a macro subject that also clearly showcases and identifies the wreck environment they live in. The image may be shot with either a macro or wide-angle lens. CFWA would be ideal for an impactful composition. The shot should not be so close that the background could be any substrate - it must be identifiable as a wreck environment. Subjects must inhabit the wreck structure itself (e.g. nudis, blennies, and octopus). Small fish that surround the wreck are not permitted as subjects. **Deadline: September 4th**	**LARGE ANIMAL ON A WRECK** – WIDE ANGLE – Sharks, goliath grouper, barracudas, and many large animals love to patrol wrecks. Create an image that highlights both the animal and the wreck itself. **Deadline: September 4th**
	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	**VIDEO**
	RESIDENTS OF THE WRECK – Highlight the charismatic residents - both big and small - of wrecks. Compose your shot so it includes the wreck environment. Subjects might include nudibranch, octopus, Goliath groupers, and sharks. **Deadline: September 4th**	**RESIDENTS OF THE WRECK** – ANY LENS – Highlight the charismatic residents - both big and small - of wrecks. Your video may tell the story of a specific species - for example, goliath groupers - or demonstrate the diversity of life wrecks can sustain. **30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: September 4th**

OCT	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	PREDATION – ANY LENS – Create an action shot demonstrating the predatory behavior of any underwater creature that moves freely. This should not just be a feeding shot but should capture the way your subject lies in wait, stalks, attacks, or captures its prey. Both predator and prey must be in the shot. Images taken on shark feeding dives are not permitted. **Deadline: October 2nd**	**LIFE IN ANEMONES** – ANY LENS – Creatures like clownfish, crabs, shrimps, and some juvenile fishes are found living in anemones. Create an image that includes one of these subjects within the anemone it inhabits. At least part of the anemone must be included in the image. (Does not include anemones on hermit crabs unless there is something living in the anemone). **Deadline: October 2nd**
	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	**VIDEO**
	ACTION/BEHAVIOR SHOT – Capture the characteristic behavior of any underwater species, for example a frogfish yawning, a sailfin blenny with its fin extended, mating, hunting, or schooling. Try and capture the peak of the action. **Deadline: October 2nd**	**THE CHASE** – ANY LENS – Create a video built around pursuit—whether predator/prey, territorial disputes, mating pursuit, or another underwater chase. Focus on speed, suspense, and cinematography. **30 seconds maximum. Deadline: October 2nd**

NOV	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
	FRAME YOUR MODEL – WIDE ANGLE – Photograph a model within a natural or manmade opening such as a porthole on a wreck or a swim through on a reef. The model should be intentionally posed in relation to the camera and lit with natural or artificial light. No shots of your dive buddy's fins! **Deadline: October 30th**	**LEADING LINES** – ANY LENS – Create an image that utilizes the power of leading lines. Look for natural or manmade lines that create visual pathways, guiding the viewer's eye through the image. These lines may be found in natural features such as sand ripples, coral formations, or shafts of sunlight filtering through the water, as well as manmade structures like bridge pilings, piers, or submerged wrecks. Use these elements creatively to add depth, dimension, and visual interest to your composition. **Deadline: October 30th**
	COMPACT/SMARTPHONE	**VIDEO**
	RULE OF THIRDS – Utilize the compositional principle of the rule of thirds in your composition. Imagine your image is divided into nine equal sections using two equally spaced horizontal lines and two equally spaced vertical lines. Place your subject or important elements along these lines or their intersection points. **Deadline: October 30th**	**TIDES** – ANY LENS – Create a video that tells the story of how tides influence underwater life in a specific tidal area or region. Show us the changing conditions, fascinating behaviors, and the unique movement of the water as it ebbs and flows. Capture the ways changing tides transform an underwater habitat and influence its marine life. Timelapse may be appropriate. 70% of footage must be underwater. **1 minute maximum. Deadline: October 30th**