



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

## Snook Workgroup Meeting #3

November 8, 2006

8:00 am to 6:00 pm

St. Petersburg, Hilton Bayfront

### REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

#### WELCOME

The meeting was opened by Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, who welcomed everyone and thanked them for their efforts and continued support. Ms. McCawley quickly reviewed the contents of the meeting packets.

The meeting was then turned over to the Facilitator, Janice Fleischer, FLASH Resolutions.

#### Members in attendance:

Roger Birt- Indian River Lagoon  
Tom Fraser - Ft Myers  
Howard Wells - Sarasota, Coastal Conservation Association West Coast  
Sue Cocking - Miami Herald, Journalist  
Rick Grasset - Sarasota  
Sawyer Smith - Ft. Myers, Tournaments  
Richard Grathwohl - Florida Keys, Florida Guides Association (FGA)  
Pat Kelly - West Coast, FGA  
Ken Leber- Mote Marine Laboratory  
Danny Guarino - Tampa, FGA, Guide (alternate for Dave Markett)  
Rick Roberts - Snook Foundation Director  
Wade Thompson - Bradenton, Tournaments  
Butch Constable - Jupiter, FGA, Guide  
Mike Kennedy - Jupiter, CCA, East Coast  
Tom Twyford - West Palm Beach Fishing Club  
Ted Forsgren - Statewide, CCA  
Curtis Bostick - Marco Island, CCA  
Gary Borland- West Palm Beach, Jupiter

#### Workgroup members not in attendance:

Brian Liem  
Dave Markett (alternate - Danny Guarino)  
Jason Schratwieser  
Ron Riley

#### FWC Staff in attendance:

Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management (DMFM)

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Rich Abrams, DMFM  
Ron Taylor, FWRI  
Bob Muller, FWRI

There were no Observers in the audience.

## AGENDA REVIEW

Ms. Fleischer reviewed the Agenda for the day's activities (**Exhibit A**). She explained the purpose of the day's meeting would be to try to finalize the recommendations of the group in the draft document presented.

All Reports of Proceedings of the Committee, Discussion and Public Guidelines and Committee related information, can be found on the FWC website at (<http://myfwc.com/marine/workgroups/index.html>)

## PRESENTATION: SPR ESTIMATES

Bob Muller, Ph.D., FWRI Assessment Section, delivered a presentation to show revisions of data since the September meeting. (**Exhibit B**)

During the presentation, members asked Dr. Muller the following questions and made comments with regard to:

Information on data changes regarding fish (snook) sizes:

1. What about the fact that MRFSS (Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey) is inaccurate?
  - a. Answer: This process does not have to do with total catches. Total catches are what has been deemed questionable. Estimated number of trips comes from the random call survey. This info is what is used here. The phone interview was either did you catch a snook or didn't you. That info is not flawed.
2. Are we getting information from the fishing guides?
  - a. Answer: Not as good as we wish; currently guides are randomly intercepted.
3. The ideal would be if guides would call FWC and tell them when they are coming in so they could be interviewed.
4. Stochastic means you run the model many times to get more accurate predictions
5. Stochastic means "variation" and it allows more for variability
6. Model review is now scheduled for October 2007
7. Method to determine the SPR is beyond the scope of this group; habitat loss is what is paramount
8. If the Commission's goal is 40% SPR, is it the median number?
  - a. Answer - Yes.
9. If the goal is 40%, is it 40% on the average or is it that it should be "not less than 40%"; this discussion needs to be about what the goal means.
10. This group needs to decide what the "goal of 40%" actually means. This is a policy discussion.
11. Tom Fraser - Commission's goal was not less than 40%, therefore most of the time you would want to shoot for greater than 40%. This presentation is showing how many times

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- it will be above and below over the long term. Look at the spread to determine what would be best overall.
12. Staff – when 40% was established it was just stated as SPR, but how this is calculated and variability have changed over time. Group needs to decide what they want.
  13. Should this data cover us for the next 10-15 years?
    - a. Answer: These projections are for 10 years. However, some things such as increased frequency of red tides, loss of habitat, and increasing fishing pressure could change that, but we cannot model things we do not know about;
    - b. The two biggest causes of lower snook populations are loss of habitat and increased fishing pressure
  14. Wouldn't weather also be a factor?
    - a. Answer - Weather isn't as big a factor because it is likely localized and snook biology is such that they might be able to move away if needed
    - b. However, cold fronts can kill fish
  15. What happens when big fish are lost? Ideal way to manage would be to let fish reproduce as many times as possible and then catch them when they are old
  16. It might be more palatable from a fishing standpoint if the slot size is larger, you may take home less fish but you will be taking more meat home.
  17. When the Commission came up with 40% where did the numbers come from?
    - a. Answer- 40% was based on literature. 30-40% was determined a good range to be in. However, we had very little data on snook back then. We were unable to do an age structured model in 1997. The goal of 40% was set but there was no real way to measure it. We were basing it on other literature, i.e. borrowed values in the absence of data. When we are above 20 or 25% we are not in danger of imminent collapse, we are still protecting spawners above those levels.
  17. Biologically we can exist in the 25-30% range but the Commission agreed to 40%, which is for abundance and larger fish.
  18. The real question is "how do you know when you are *there*"? Answer- All regs that inhibit fishing are helping the fish. What you have in place is working, but you are battling against increasing fishing pressure, etc.
  19. The net ban eliminated a lot of small fish mortality and created a lot of food for bigger fish

Snook movement portion of presentation:

1. This portion of the presentation is to address questions about Atlantic coast movement that arose at the September meeting.
2. Snook will move during the winter time but mostly in the lagoons
3. Recapture rate on West Coast is 12%; on East Coast it was about 27%
4. The SPR as it stands is not a bad number, if it gets moved up you will have more and larger fish, assuming the habitat could support it.
5. The only way to rebuild this fish is to build the older age classes
6. Most fish are caught between 4-6 years old at the current slot size. The narrower slot allows snook to move through the slot faster, thus increasing SPR.
7. Most of the fish in the current slot size are males (they have not transitioned yet); so what does that mean for population growth?
  - a. Answer: You need really to think of this as immature and mature; at the end of the season the largest males transition into females. 97% of snook change from male to female as they mature; so the larger the fish the more likelihood that it will be female, but there are some older males out there.
8. Snook change sex because of social variation not an age variation

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Genetic diversity question (Can you take a fish from the Atlantic, Gulf, or Caribbean and determine where they came from based on DNA?):

1. Atlantic snook very different from Gulf and Caribbean snook. There was no overlap between the Caribbean and the Gulf.
  - a. So what about Florida Bay?
    - i. Answer: If they are distinct enough, they could be managed differently

## OVERVIEW OF DOCUMENT CONSENSUS PROCESS

Janice Fleischer, the Facilitator, explained to the members that, if at all possible, the goal for the day was to complete the consensus process on the Draft Recommendation Document (**Exhibit C**-document with consensus rankings included from this meeting). However, the agenda would not be rushed, so if, in order to accomplish the goals of this group, additional meetings are necessary, they will be scheduled. The next meeting of the Workgroup is January 10, 2007.

Ms. Fleischer explained the procedure that would be followed and the group then began the consensus process. To assist in the process, the member packets contained several documents which were explained during Dr. Muller's presentation and were used by members to make recommendations based on Options presented. (**Exhibit D**-Table 1-Results of stochastic model for selected potential management options; **Exhibit E**- same results sorted by SPR outcomes; **Exhibit F**-Static spawning potential ratio (sSPR) associated with alternative regulatory possibilities for snook; **Exhibit G**- Options-Atlantic and Gulf; **Exhibit H**-Snook and Cast Nets information; **Exhibit I**-Peer Review Memo dated October 3, 2006; **Exhibit J**-Uncertainty in SPR estimates Memo; **Exhibit K**- FS §68B-21 Snook)

**Exhibit C** , attached to this document, reflects the consensus rankings of each section of the document and its recommendations. Following the consensus ranking table, the Facilitator captured comments made by members. When consensus was achieved, it is so noted. If consensus was not achieved and a vote was taken, the results of the votes are shown. In some cases, there was time only for a first ranking and no discussion of the item. Those items will be discussed at the next meeting of the Workgroup. The Workgroup's adopted decision making rules state that, if a vote is needed, 60% of the voting members present at the meeting is necessary to pass an item. At this meeting, 18 members were present; therefore, 11 votes were needed to pass an item.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were present

Members of the public are encouraged to submit their comments in writing on the comment cards provided at each meeting or email the Facilitator; Janice Fleischer ([janice@flashresolutions.com](mailto:janice@flashresolutions.com)) within the first week following the meeting and those comments will be included in the Report.

## EVALUATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEXT STEPS

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Members were asked to complete their meeting Evaluations and turn them in. The Facilitator thanked everyone for their hard work and patience.

## ADJOURN

The meeting was then adjourned.