



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Snook Workgroup Meeting #2

September 19, 2006

8:00 am to 5:00 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 continued support for this effort. Ms. McCawley announced the sad passing of Hap Wilson, son of Commissioner Sandra Kaupe. Several members of the Workgroup were not at the meeting so they could attend Mr. Wilson's funeral. A moment of silence was observed in recognition of Mr. Wilson's passing.

Ms. McCawley announced the resignation of two workgroup members, Byron Stout and Frank Sargeant. Both members were representatives of the journalist community and both had received directions from their Editors to resign due to a perceived conflict of interest on the part of their publications.

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

Members in attendance:

Tom Fraser - Ft Myers
Howard Wells - Sarasota, Coastal Conservation Association West Coast
Sue Cocking - Miami Herald, Journalist
Ray Markham (for Rick Grasset)
Sawyer Smith - Ft. Myers, Tournaments
Richard Grathwohl - Florida Keys, Florida Guides Association (FGA)
Pat Kelly - West Coast, FGA
Danny Guarino - Tampa, FGA, Guide
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: **Not sure of this either, check it out for me**
Brian Liem

Ken Leber (alternate - Rick Roberts)
Dave Markett (alternate - Danny Guarino)
Rick Grasset (alternate - Ray Markham)
Roger Birt
Jason Schratwieser
Mike Kennedy
Tom Twyford
Ron Riley

FWC Staff in attendance:

William Teehan, Division of Marine Fisheries Management (DMFM)
Jessica McCawley, DMFM
Jasmine MacPherson, DMFM
Ron Taylor, FWRI
Bob Muller, FWRI
Luiz Barbieri, FWRI
Charlie Shelfer, Legal office
Ed Chambers, LE
Anthony Cacciurri, LE

There was one Observer in the audience.

AGENDA REVIEW

Ms. Fleischer reviewed the Agenda for the day's activities (**Exhibit A**). She explained that the day would be spent refining the Goals and Objectives which members had begun drafting at the last meeting; then moving on to consideration of action steps to implement the Objectives. She indicated the work of the day would be a combination of full group and small group exercises.

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>)

FWC DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Bob Muller, Ph.D., FWRI Assessment Section, gave a presentation which attempted to answer many questions posed by the workgroup members at the first meeting in July, 2006. (**Exhibit B**). Additional slides to the presentation are added to this Report as **Exhibits B1 and B2**, **Exhibit B3** is a Memo regarding Snook Stock Assessment Intervals, **Exhibit B4** is a memo regarding Possible boat limit for snook) During Dr. Muller's presentation, members asked the following questions:

1. We should project out three years beyond end period of data or data becomes outdated.
 - a. Good idea and not difficult at all
 - b. Challenge is how to predict human behavior in three years
2. Fish move north and south on both coasts
3. Assessments not done by estuary now, done by coast
4. If this group feels this species (snook) needs a peer review, you should let the staff know; right now the methods are peer reviewed but not the specific species

5. Why are we finding that fish are moving? Is it just because we are tagging more, I find that it has to do with red tide, when that comes, the fish move away.
6. With a higher SPR you will have more and bigger fish. What we are trying to do is allow fish to get older before being caught, which is what a higher SPR means.
7. How does habitat loss get taken into consideration with SPR?
 - a. Number of recruits is a different issue, west coast has more habitat
8. Page 17 of presentation, upper curve, is beginning to flatten out (21%), that means that even at 21% you will begin to lose the fish
9. I disagree that all snook change to female, on west coast we catch larger males that never switched
 - a. You have to remember that the data are based on averages
10. What about Everglades snook?
 - a. We need to determine how many are Atlantic and how many are gulf in Everglades
11. Conceptually, a target is the place where you want to be, the threshold is just a minimum and the fish will go extinct
12. The real issue is getting the SPR at 40%; the danger is that the population is not going to survive
13. FWC is going to begin setting thresholds and targets for other species
14. This group agreed as a whole that the 40% is the goal to achieve
15. Do trips include the increase in tournament fishing?
 - a. Trips that include snook fishing only, not just all private boat trips
16. Do you know who participates in kill fishing or catch and release; do you know which, if either, are increasing?
17. Is there a saturation point on number of people who can fish?
 - a. We don't know yet when the population begins to flatten out
18. Why isn't each person getting a fishing license made to fill in a trip ticket? Each person should be forced to report how many are caught and how many are released.
19. Is this a law or can the FWC require this?
 - a. Remember shore fisheries don't need to get a license
20. If we go back to the 70's, we had more boats out there now in the Jupiter area
 - a. May thru Sept- I took numbers about 20K fish in 1976; in 2005 there were only about 200 fish killed
 - b. Question is how many were caught and released?
21. You are lucky in Jupiter if you get 1 keeper out of 10; directed snook fishing is much lower in Jupiter now
22. **Get the information from Butch to Bob Muller**; Butch gets numbers from the 10% of folks that catch 90% of fish
23. What is the estimate of number who buy snook stamp compared to those fishing for snook? How can we gather these numbers into the data?
 - a. Send out a survey to snook stamp holders
 - b. Impacts from retired folks, shore based, 5 year licenses
24. If every angler sent in information; it would overwhelm the staff of the agencies
 - a. Not enough staff
25. Major changes need to be done, but we don't need to be asking for more information
26. Be careful about falsified information; egos are involved
27. Even after the fact information might be worthwhile.
28. The guide information from Everglades National Park is used in the assessment
29. FWC always wants to have multiple sources for data so they can check consistency of the data

30. The acreage of mangroves data is 10 years old, but it still shows that habitat is decreasing on both coasts
31. How much habitat do we have to support the baby fish? We need to know how many baby snook can live in an acre of habitat? We need to know how much habitat is necessary to support a certain number of fish.
32. Habitat is essential to getting juveniles; therefore, if there is not enough habitat the catch and release may not save the population anyway
33. Snook might seek other habitat if they can't find enough mangrove habitat
 - a. You might not find juveniles on reef, but rivers which are not mangrove may house juvenile
34. Can a dock be a habitat? I.E. can they be artificial habitat?
 - a. Juvenile habitat is what we are talking about, not where adults will hang out
35. If you had to have a kill tag you would probably reduce number of fish killed
36. Could also have a trophy kill tag; one or two in a person's life time
37. Isn't a snook stamp really a kill tag? No, it doesn't limit the number of fish you can kill
38. You cannot compare red drum to snook; they grow at different rates
39. Instead of discussing what slots will be closed we need to think about what months should stay open
40. Enforcement is the real problem

SUNSHINE LAW PRESENTATION

Charlie Shelfer, FWC Legal Office, gave a brief overview of Florida's Sunshine Laws. Members were cautioned not to engage in any dialogue concerning the work of the Workgroup outside of these publicly noticed meetings. Additionally, members were told not to send emails to one another nor to hit the "Respond to All" key when they receive email announcements.

One or two members questioned whether this group should be subject to the Sunshine Laws and indicated they would have their legal counsel contact Mr. Shelfer.

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public commented.

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) within the first week following the meeting and those comments will be included in the Report.

SMALL GROUP BREAKOUTS- OBJECTIVE REFINEMENT AND ACTION STEPS

The remainder of the day was spent in exercises to refine the Goals and Objectives previously drafted and begin to identify the recommendations/action steps needed to implement the Objectives. The first small group breakout was for the purpose of refining the Goals and Objectives. Following this exercise, the full group reconvened and each small group reported the results of their work to the full group. The full group then commented on the work of each small group. The second small group exercise was for the purpose of beginning to develop specific

recommendations/action steps. Once again, upon reconvening, the full group commented on the work of each small group. The results of both small group exercises and the member comments are shown below:

Group on Enforcement and Licensing

Richard Grathwahl, Howard Wells, Wade Thompson, Gary Borland

GOAL: Direct enforcement/education to raise the SPR

Objective: Decrease Poaching

Recommendations:

1. Uniform penalties statewide
2. Enlist snook experts to help identify specific areas of high incidence of violators
3. Direct "sting" operations to target areas on land and sea, visit on regular intervals

Objective: Hire more officers and increase officer retention

Recommendation:

1. Increase funding from licensing revenue (see "Raise fees" below)

Objective: General Public education on violations and snook in general

Recommendations:

1. all license holders mandated to receive fishing regulations upon issuance of license, put all in one brochure:
 - a. angler ethics and fish handling
 - b. size and season regulations
 - c. Fishing Lines magazine

No comments after Objectives Report

Member comments after Recommendations (Action Steps) Report:

1. There is already a good process, but need to work on violations; want to get Texas in it
2. Re: education: tips on decreasing mortality (added by another group, see the Stock)
3. Snook ethics flyer to distribute to waterfront homeowners; make it distributable to schools, conservation groups and fishing clubs

GOAL: Licensing: Fund Research, education and enhance enforcement

Objective: Raise License fees

Recommendations:

1. Raise license from \$2 to \$5 minimum
2. Increase aim of \$675K with higher fees

Objective: Increase the number of permit buyers

Recommendations:

1. To harvest a snook, from land or boat, you must purchase a snook stamp

Objective: Direct funding of snook stamp

Recommendations:

1. Added revenue from snook stamp increase will go to enforcement and research only!

Comments on Objective Report:

1. Take a look at fines for illegal take of snook (shore based anglers, etc.) what is the current penalty and should it be higher.
2. Judges tell folks that they want fish violations not to come into their courtroom. Fines will not solve that problem.
3. Fines depend on which county you are in, make recommendations to have judges have standard minimum charges.
4. Increase dollar amount on snook stamp. (\$4-5) Optional stamp.
5. Licensing everyone who uses the resource. Eliminate the shore based exemption.

Comments after recommendations (Action Steps) Report:

1. Why are you keeping the numbers low on snook stamp
 - a. Just a minimum, we can increase
2. Funding should be a separate item; it goes to all Goals
3. A strong recommendation from this group would carry a lot of weight (Luiz); snook stamp money is ONLY used for snook; as a consequence, snook in Florida has the most complete stock assessment; we still need more money; working through the snook stamp is to this group's advantage
4. Funds are apportioned among enforcement and other items (stock enhancement, etc.)

Group Stock Enhancement etc.

Danny Guarino, Butch Constable, Pat Kelly, Ray Markham

GOAL: Determine stock enhancement viability

- a. Viability of stock enhancement does not seem to work; consider other solutions such as consider mosquito impoundments
- b. Financing vehicles
- c. Increase license/user fees-license all anglers

Recommendations:

1. Re-evaluate viability of stock enhancement program and consider mosquito impoundments to further growth of snook to size vs. cost

GOAL: Outreach and education

- A. release mortality
 1. Research for more accurate data
 - a. live and artificial bait
- B. Include tips on handling release
 1. Tools, terminal tackle (barbless hook and circle hook), and predation with rules and regulations at license purchase agent's location
 2. Fishing Lines (FWC publication), but place in all publications
- C. Promote catch and release

Recommendations:

1. Include information and tips for decreasing release mortality on all publications of rules and regulations, i.e. Fishing Lines or on separate sheet and at tax collector's office
2. Notify all media re: PSA about techniques for release, tackle, release tools, predation, and catch-and-release.

GOAL: Estuary micro management-geographic (dictated by science)

- A. East coast
 - a. Re-evaluate beach renourishment projects and their effect on shoreline habitats mangrove plantings
 - b. Okeechobee east/west runoff
- B. West coast
 - a. Red tide
 - b. Dredging/renourishment
 - c. Water quality-Piney Point

Recommendations:

- 1 Leave east and west separate but dictate by science
- 2 Establish mitigation of lost habitat equal to development
- 3 Evaluate beach renourishment and its impact on shoreline habitat-change if it is found to have a negative impact
- 4 West Coast: identify cause of red tide and contributing factors.. i.e. storm runoff, Okeechobee runoff and freshwater discharges, etc.
- 5 Mosquito control-determine impact on snook population

Comments on Objectives Report:

1. With research the tournaments are available to help with whatever efforts are put in place. Not even looking for compensation. Take advantage of how many fish are brought in to help with research.
2. A bond issue to preserve critical mangrove areas. (example: Broward County)
 - a. Put public pressure to increase habitat
3. Development is a real issue re: habitat; we must set aside the habitat and protect it from development.
4. Wallop-Breaux \$\$, tap into that money; look at federal sharing

Comments on Recommendations (Action Steps) Report: No comments

Group 40% SPR and Research and Monitoring

Ted Forsgren, Curtis Bostick, Sawyer Smith, Sue Cocking, Rick Roberts, Tom Frazer

This group did not memorialize their discussions in full, please see attached **Exhibit C** submitted by small group member Tom Frazer subsequent to the meeting.

40% SPR Recommendations:

1. Committee asks staff to develop options for regulations which have a four month open season (Spring and Fall) the months of: March and April and September and October.
2. Examine a number of four inch slot sizes including:
 1. 28-32
 2. 29-33
 3. 30-34

The Research and Monitoring is all done in support of the 40% SPR

Recommendations:

1. Examine (extend peer review) facts and assumptions which we used in the two peer reviewed models
2. Have externally peer reviewed
3. Explicit estimates of the fishing pressure (mortality) and tied to general population and fishing projections with reasonable bounds.
4. Age classes present between Jupiter-Palm Beach, need description
5. Snook movement along East Coast emphasis north of Jupiter and south of Palm Beach
6. Description of genetic variation and its relationship to management alternatives

Comments on Objectives Report:

1. Regulate E and W coast the same? Catch limits and slot size?
 - a. Not necessarily; need to look more into each coast separately
2. Managing the coasts separately
3. Need to make sure that people that know about each coast are instrumental in making decisions about that coast
4. East coast: With regard to spawning: no significant of spawning in Sept that survive. Cold water, hurricanes, ground (?); early fish have higher success ratio for spawning; sept is a marginal month for spawning
5. East coast: One fish limit: incentive if you can catch two to want to fish for snook; very few people are catching their fish limit anyway
6. East coast: Size limit: if we propose 28-32: this would greatly reduce number of fish that could be kept; it would effectively close the season if you go to this large a number
7. East coast: May and Sept are the only real fishing months
8. East coast: many other fish to catch; much greater diversity of fish than west coast
9. Some concern about SPRs; spawning is only one part of the process; you need to have the habitat for survival of the juveniles
10. Managing this fish, even on each coast the more local area the fish are different; this is not only about each of the coasts
11. Err on the side of the resource; what is the more critical resource (the more critical resource is the west coast)

Comments on Recommendations (Action Steps) Report:

1. How long does it take for fish to come out of each slot size recommended?
2. Genetic differences: around Keys, are you looking for a new boundary?
3. FGA/Marathon guides would not want to move the line. We already impose a one-fish bag on ourselves
4. Let data tell you what you need
5. From a human/enforcement perspective

- 6 One thought is that there is no difference in east coast and west coast; it would just be snook
- 7 To the scientists: is there any harm to regulating snook statewide rather than by coast?
 - a. no
- 8 To scientists: are you comfortable with the mortality rates that are plugged in
 - a. We think it is a low estimate
- 9 Catch and release numbers are huge; that could change our SPRs drastically
- 10 Many fish are caught multiple times; especially in areas that are more restricted
- 11 Model is sophisticated; just need to increase the data going in to the model
- 12 Isn't the SPR just a line in the sand, just a number that we are deciding on as a benchmark
- 13 Viability of the species as a whole across the state; if it has happened in Jupiter why wouldn't it happen elsewhere? We should err on the side of protecting the stock rather than the length of the season.

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public commented.

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EVALUATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEXT STEPS

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.
