

## DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED



### Redfish Workgroup Meeting September 7, 2006 Statewide Video Conference

## Meeting #2 Summary Report

FWC Staff- Jessica McCawley (DMFM), Chad Hanson (DMFM), Rich Abrams (DMFM), Lee Schlesinger (DMFM), Roy Williams (DMFM), Rob Beaton (LE), Bob Muller (FWRI-St. Pete), Luiz Barbieri (FWRI-St. Pete), Jessi DiGennaro (FWRI-St. Pete), Dennis David (RD-Ocala), Greg Holder (RD-Lakeland), Russel Brodie (RA-Jacksonville), Rich Paperno (RA-Melbourne), Louie Roberson (RD-Panama City)

#### Invited Workgroup Members Present:

##### **Tallahassee**

Ted Forsgren CCA - Florida

##### **St. Pete**

Danny Guarino FGA

##### **Lakeland**

Pat Kelly FGA

##### **Melbourne**

Jim Gray CCA - IRL

##### **Jacksonville**

Vic Tyson Inshore Saltwater Anglers (ISA)  
Rick Hill (member of public, ISA)

##### **Ocala**

Arthur Allison IFA, tournaments

##### **Gainesville**

Charlie Rogers Redfish Nation, Wacassa Fishing Club

##### **Marathon**

Stephen Holmes writer

##### **Panama City**

Fred Myers tournament angler

##### **Phone**

Wright Taylor Redfish tournaments in Naples, CCA

#### Workgroup Members Invited but Not Present:

Andreas Smith

Tim Tucker

Jimmy Musconis Panhandle

Ronnie Day commercial – Organized Fishermen of Florida (OFF)

Jason Schratwieser IGFA

Mike Locklear CCA – Homosassa

Jody Campbell Big Bend

Dave Markett FGA

Ray Markham FGA

Merrily Dunn guide - Sarasota

|                            |                                           |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Gary Meyer                 | South Florida Fly Fishing Club            |
| Michael Leary              |                                           |
| John Tenor                 | guide - Destin                            |
| Rodney Smith               | Florida Sportfish Association             |
| Joe Roberts                | guide – Indian River                      |
| Jack Curlett               | Ocean Reef Club                           |
| <del>Dawn Aylesworth</del> | <del>Old Salts Fishing Club</del>         |
| <del>Joseph Boswell</del>  | <del>angler – Milton</del>                |
| Mark Ward                  | Everglades Angler/ Backcountry Flyfishers |
| John Vickers               | no organization                           |
| Frank Romer                | Port St. Lucie Anglers Club – Stuart      |

**\*\*The following draft represents the free flow discussion regarding the red drum fishery and potential management options held via statewide video conference on 7 September 2006. This document is not intended to be a narrative, just the bulleted comments from the workshop participants. The participants are identified in the text when they first comment. Please look over your comments to check for accuracy and return comments via e-mail to [jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com](mailto:jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com) as soon as it is possible. Your comments/edits will be incorporated into a final more polished document. Thank you for your willingness to participate.\*\***

Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

- Welcome/Introductions/Agenda Review (3:45pm)

Robert Muller, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

- Stock Assessment Review
  - explanation of escapement rate
  - escapement above Commission goal (30%) on both coasts at this time but the trend is going down
  - trips directed at redfish on both coasts going up significantly
  - fishing mortality increasing which is eroding escapement
  - number of redfish killed in directed harvest and 5% of released fish going up on both coasts, (note: the scale on Atlantic and Gulf coasts are different on figures)
  - moratorium had a very positive effect
  - management was not strict enough to keep escapement high
  - both coasts above 30% but heading towards below 30%

No questions on review of stock assessment results

Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

- Management Alternatives
  - Recap of last meeting and survey results
  - at last workgroup meeting, agreement on tightening up management now rather than more harsh restrictions later
  - consensus that group wanted proactive management
  - preferred change in slot limit over closed seasons

- email survey respondents preferred 1-3 month closed season or change in slot limit

Discussion on Management options – from two page handout (dated September 7, 2006)

Ted Forsgren, CCA-Florida (in Tallahassee)

- CCA-FL recommends to the Commission a management goal of 40% escapement rate (ER) instead of 30%
- redfish shouldn't be managed at lower level than other fish (e.g., snook 40% SPR, seatrout 35% SPR, mullet 35% SPR)
- support a reduction in maximum size statewide to 26 inches
- would bring stocks above 40% on east coast but at 35% on west coast
- have not yet decided how to bring west coast ER up to above 40%, no consensus yet in CCA
- Commission needs to manage to 40% ER management goal
- future stock assessments should include 3 year projections at end of data set

Vic Tyson, Inshore Saltwater Anglers (in Jacksonville)

- against closed seasons because in competition with state of GA

Jim Gray, CCA-IRL (in Melbourne)

- Agrees with everything Ted said
- driving bus by looking in rearview mirror
- since stock assessment, have had two red tides on gulf coast and shut down of hatchery which is putting extra pressure on redfish
- fishing pressure in Mosquito Lagoon increased because of publicity
- tournament fish being pulled out of one area (Mosquito Lagoon and Indian River) and released in another area (Titusville)
- redfish should be managed for abundance and not fillets (meat fishery)
- be safe (conservative), manage for abundance
- look forward and not back
- guides bring people to FL

Stephen Holmes (in Marathon, though fishes in Flagler & St. Johns, writer)

- also thinking of 40% escapement rate
- supports closed season or change in slot limit, whatever it takes to get stocks up
- bring minimum up, no need to keep 18 or 19-inch fish
- need tighter enforcement (doesn't see LE at boat ramps in area on weekends, sees oversize reds on fillet table)

Question: what effect does inshore shrimping have on weekends?

Robert Muller

- F. Coleman study from 1992 looked at shrimp nets and seatrout
- can't remember numbers

Chad Hanson, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

- looked at Coleman shrimp study and very few redfish caught in shrimp nets

Liuz Barbieri, Fish & Wildlife Research Institute

- FWRI will look for more information on shrimp bycatch and report back to the group at the next meeting

Danny Guarino, Florida Guides Association (in St. Petersburg)

- not sure how to raise to 40% escapement on gulf without a closed season
- perhaps 35% would be more reasonable
- does not support closure

Pat Kelly, Florida Guides Association (in Lakeland)

- FGA does not support any closure
- has not polled FGA to get any consensus on regulation changes
- doesn't think closure is necessary
- going to 2 redfish not necessary either
- supports going to 20 or 22 inches min to 26 inches max

Question: what if went to 20 or 22 inches minimum size – what would we get out of that?

Arthur Allison, past tournament director for Inshore Fishing Association, Hunt for Reds in Titusville (Ocala)

- fish are not filleted but released with low mortality
- tournaments already went to pinched tail before rule recent rule
- rule cuts slot size down to ~26 inches
- tournament fish go back to water
- tournament anglers not that interested in raising minimum limit because going for bigger fish
- personally does not eat any redfish

Question: Why is there such a sharp decline in the escapement rate starting in 2000? Is this related to red tide on Gulf, what kind of effect does this really have on the fishery?

Robert Muller

- trips in 2000 and 2001 abnormally high, particularly on east coast
- caused escapement to drop after that

Arthur Allison

Question: how do you determine the number of fishing trips?

Robert Muller

- proportion of trips that caught or targeted red drum by all the trips in that strata
- applied to MRFSS effort estimates

Arthur Allision

- IFA tournaments started in 2000

Jim Gray

- clarify: tournaments in Mosquito Lagoon check in area in Titusville, (all fish caught in Mosquito Lagoon, released in Indian River)
- very few fish make back to Mosquito Lagoon
- tremendous decrease in number of redfish caught in Mosquito Lagoon due to the number of tournaments

Fred Myers, tournament angler

- change of minimum size limit would not be effective
- would support higher minimum 21 to 22 inches to get to 40% and cut in maximum to 26 inches
- need data on 21 inches
- changes would not be too bad for recreational or tournament anglers
- he travels throughout state
- Mosquito Lagoon has habitat protection, pole/troll zones
- can see direct results (benefits) in catch in protected area

Stephen Holmes

- typically see rat race to fish for 18-20 inch redfish
- recreational anglers anchor deeper water with live bait
- hammer little reds when they come through
- typical angler less likely to find larger reds and get back in shallower areas
- increasing lower limit would protect the redfish pups because the recreational anglers would not be hammering them as hard
- still have to deal with 5% mortality rate from releasing them
- shallow waters protect the fisheries
- tournament anglers more knowledgeable

Fred Myers

- lots of people violate rules
- they are going to violate rules no matter what the regulations
- the more you change the law, the more people are going to be breaking regulations unless put more law enforcement out there
- the projections look good but need more enforcement

Rob Beaton, Division of Law Enforcement (in Tallahassee)

- would love to have an officer at all ramps on weekends but not possible
- losing lots of good people in law enforcement
- looking for solutions for better retention
- recent study said LE needs to increase field personnel staff 3-fold
- but budget and legislative issues are limiting factors
- will pass comments to area
- consistency simplest for LE and people to understand

- lessens confusion, ease of enforcement

Stephen Holmes

- suggested fishing regulations posted on signs, etc. like highway speed limits
- better public education and awareness
- develop reserve program with local sheriff departments so don't have to go to 6 month reserve school to help enforcement at boat ramps

Rob Beaton

- revamped reserve office program to have tiered levels of reserves where some reserves have arresting power
- there is a revitalized interest in reserve officers

Wright Taylor, CCA, tournament angler (on phone)

- agrees with Ted on 40% escapement
- the 20-26 inch option may get higher escapement rate than listed because we actually do not know, the 37% may actually be 42%
- big fish not worth eating
- personally likes 20-26 inch slot

Ted Forsgren

Question to Pat Kelly – does FGA prefer to tighten slot size instead of any closure?

Pat Kelly

- yes, that is correct.

Question: Why does having 2 fish in slot of 24-27 inches have higher escapement rate than 1 fish in a slightly bigger slot (min 20 to 24 inches)?

Bob Muller

- having a very tight slot, very few fish will be retained even if the bag is 2 fish

Greg Holder, Regional Director, FWC

- most benefit seems to be adjusting the slot without closed season, or bag limit

Bob Muller

- the narrowing of slot enables shorter life time to be within slot and then higher escapement rate
- will only be in the slot for only 4-6 months of its life with a very narrow slot (24-27 inches)

Arthur Allison

- current slot (18-27 inches) with September & October closed season seems to have a more effect than going to 18-26 inches

- likes 1 fish bag limit
- One month closure seems to have most effect on numbers

Question: How would everyone feel about one month closed season?

Pat Kelly

- clarifies FGA supports 1 fish
- don't take small redfish
- doesn't want to hurt anyone, but everyone is hurting fish

Vic Tyson

- if closed in October, plenty of fish to take home that time of year
- not much meat on fish 18 inches
- one closed month (e.g., October) when other fish available won't hurt anglers or guides very much
- one month would help fish and get to escapement goal of 40%
- don't want to close for 2-3 months, or March-April - would hurt the guides

Pat Kelly

- doesn't support month closure
- Everglades City folks would straighten him out
- would not be real popular

Vic Tyson

- difference in escapement rate
- one month closure wouldn't hurt much up in Jacksonville
- going to 20 inches would help
- supports 20-26 inches, 1 bag limit, no closure will help fish

Question: How does the increase from pinching tail effect escapement rate, e.g., a 26¼ inch fish going to 27 inches?

Bob Muller

- haven't looked at that effect yet

Ted Forsgren

- looking at snook, managing at 40% will have lot more fish in water and a lot bigger fish
- would really improve the overall fishery if go to 40% because a lot more fish in the water

Bob Muller

- avoid comparisons between snook and red drum because life history differences
- not going to see more fish at 40% because adults will be offshore
- behaves differently, different biology

Arthur Allison

- we automatically jumped on 40% because CCA made recommendation

- what does DMFM feel about 40%?
- Are we going with 30 or 40%?
- Supports 19-26 inch slot, 1 fish bag limit, no closed season

Jessica McCawley

- DMFM will have to discuss further
- This is not about what type of fishery DMFM wants, but what the users and stakeholder want
- 30% set at entire gulf right now
- don't anticipate other states to go above 30%
- does not mean Florida can't have higher standards and go to 40%

Ted Forsgren

- ASMFC plan already at 40% escapement

Jessica McCawley

- yes but based on older data from 1998
- ASMFC at 40% but not calculated the same way FL calculates escapement

Ted Forsgren

- ASMFC has current position that redfish should be managed for 40% escapement, which includes east Florida

Jessica McCawley

- Confusing in how it is calculated
- almost like comparing apples and oranges (from handout tables and ASMFC calculation)
- not calculated like Florida calculates 30% escapement

Ted Forsgren

- data Florida has is excellent and need to use what is here.

Bob Muller

- ASMFC evaluating 40% compliance on management table based on management strategy
- their table does not integrate biology, etc.

Dennis David

- do the fishery managers have a feeling of management goal?

Jessica McCawley

- projections go out three years
- anything in the upper 30s or 40s would be positive
- anything above goal of 30% is positive
- could set threshold (based on biological benchmark) and target (considers social and economic)

- wouldn't want to drop below threshold (e.g., 30%) and have target at 40% and manage for 40%
- or could come up with one number and try to achieve that

Arthur Allison

- supports 19-26 inches, no closed season
- with pinched tail will hopefully bring the 26 inch down some
- may bring Gulf coast up to 40%

Jessica McCawley

- go around room to get opinion on management
- would like stock assessment group to get further option numbers for up to 22 inch minimum size
- DMFM goal to go draft rule in February
- Preference to go out to workshop before next workgroup meeting
- And meet with this group again sometime by February
- send out additional info on options
- then get more input from group via email
- then one more meeting before February

Ted Forsgren

- It would be helpful to see the escapement numbers on 20-26 inches with 1 month closed season (March or April, September or October) to examine as an option
- Will get information out to members
- big difference of opinion on slots versus closed season among CCA groups throughout state
- Would like to see 40% for sure on the Gulf coast

Vic Tyson

Question: why no difference in escapement rate between 19-20 inch minimum slot on Atlantic for maximum 26 inch

Bob Muller

- fish on Atlantic tend to be bigger
- only 1% difference on Gulf

Vic Tyson

- some guides in ISA would like narrowing slot on both sides one or two inches
- or one month closed season
- would prefer October closure is had to close
- will meet again with club
- main preference 20-26 or 20-25 inches with no closed season

Rick Hill, strictly recreational angler

- wants to get escapement as high as can get
- prefers no closed season

- keep slot as big as could to keep higher
- prefers 18-25 inches
- would give younger folks better chance to get keeper fish

Jim Gray

- would go with any rule that gets to 40%
- like to see numbers at 20-26 inches, with 1 fish
- no closed season
- can live with anything that got to 40%

Fred Myers

- does not want closed season
- will hurt tournaments
- agree with 40%, 20-26 inches, with no closed season
- also would like to see numbers of 22-26 inches with no closed season

Pat Kelly

- will send out to FGA members information on options
- 20-26 inches, would like to see numbers
- doesn't feel FGA will support any closed season unless absolutely dire and needs to happen
- supports CCA at 40%

Wright Taylor

- supports 40%
- supports size to go to whatever needs to go
- like 20-26 inches
- interested in 22-26 inch option

Jessica McCawley

- will send out via email the escapement options based on meeting

Question: Does the group want to go to workshops, or another workgroup meeting?

Ted Forsgren

- can't keep dragging out
- data already three years old
- go to workshop first

Danny Guarino

- going to 20-26 inches with no closed season will get near what everyone wants, serves everybody's purpose
- never get to 40% on Gulf and on Atlantic based on option numbers
- if need to go to workshop, all for it
- Can't come up with decision right here

Pat Kelly

- go to workshop to get more input from public

Jim Gray

- go to workshop
- email numbers on other options and give time to get info to/from groups
- need production hatchery to put millions of fish in the water and this issue will go away

Fred Myers

- go to workshop
- have options on paper (20-26 inches) that will make everyone happy as can be when change rule
- obviously need to change and none of the changes hurt anything

Arthur Allison

- going to say 19-26 inches will get us close to 40% (average of 39%)
- surprised that data is 3 years old
- agrees with Jim on releasing hatchery fish in water

Vic Tyson

- go to workshop
- agree with 20-26 inches
- 22-26 inches will need more crowd control at workshops

Jessica McCawley – closing remarks (5:15pm)

Notes prepared by Chad Hanson, DMFM