



Snook Management in Florida

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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Marine Fisheries Management



Snook in Florida

- Snook fishery is one of Florida's premiere and iconic fisheries
- Stakeholder values have changed over time
 - No longer any commercial harvest
 - Snook permit (stamp) to collect targeted money for snook research
 - Varying interest as a food fish
 - Management has changed and is constantly evolving
- Lots of stakeholders interested in the research and management of snook in Florida
- Management goal of 40% SPR since 1994
 - High management goal to allow for buffer from episodic environmental events



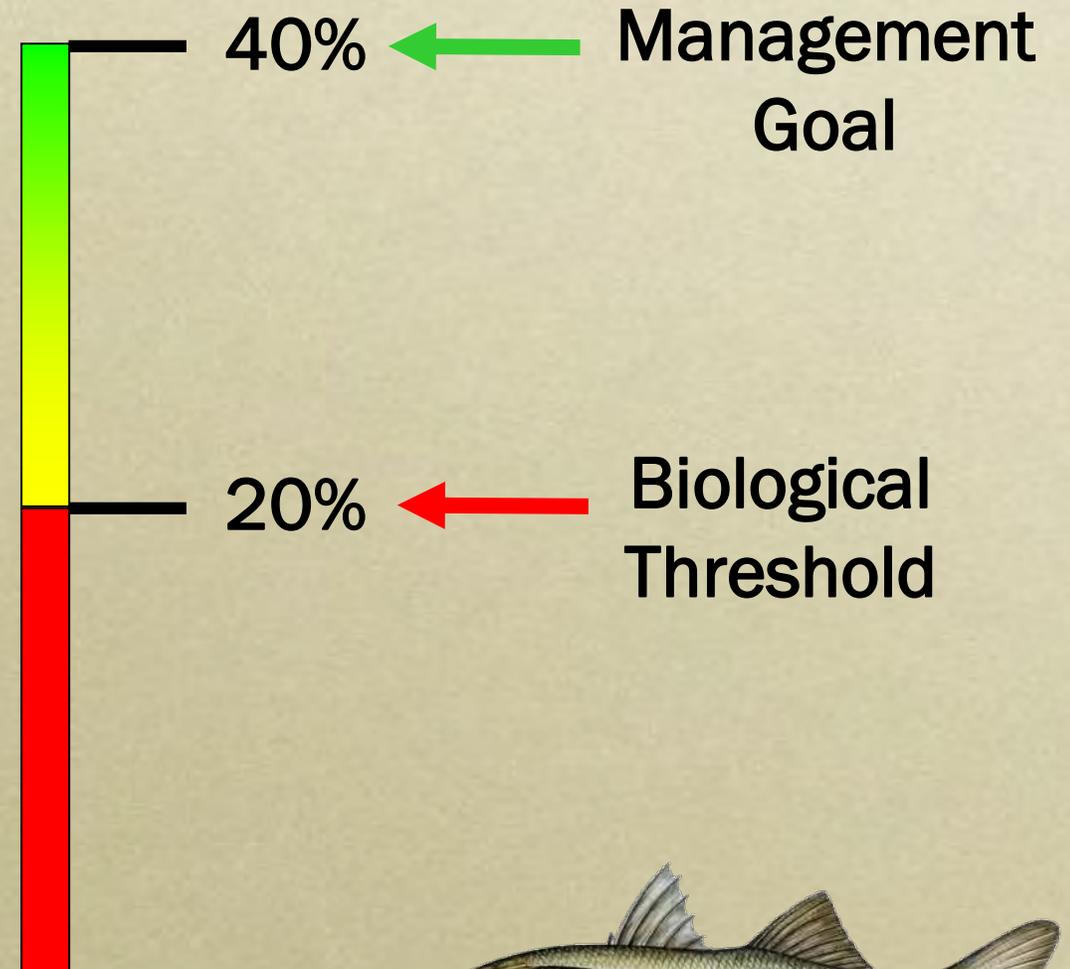
Snook Management Thermometer

SPR = Spawning Potential Ratio

- Defined as the ratio of mature fish in the population compared to an unfished state
- Management goal of 40% SPR is more conservative than some other species to provide buffer against episodic environmental events

2006: Last Snook Symposium

- SPR goal of 40% was not being met on either Atlantic or Gulf coast – Gulf 26-32% and Atlantic 25-26%



Florida's Snook Management

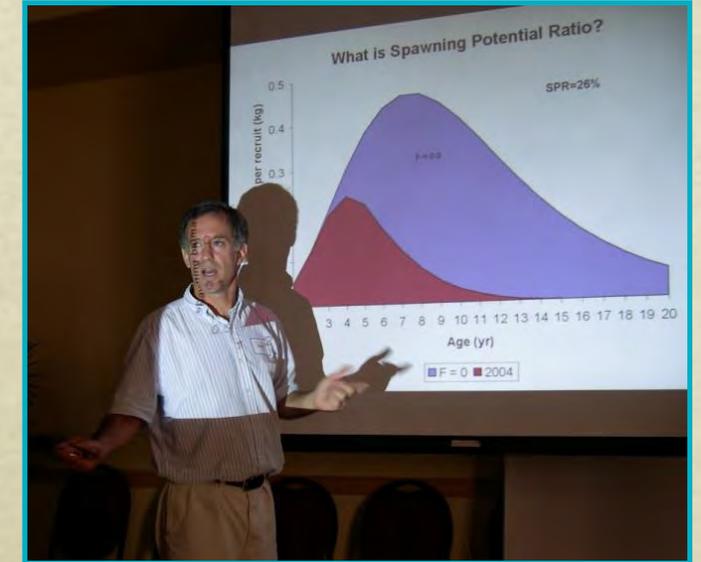
- Size and bag limits in effect since the mid-1950s
 - Commercial harvest prohibited in 1957
 - Snook stamp required in 1989
- Numerous rule changes throughout the years
- Next few slides:
 - The suite of rule changes following the 2006 Snook Symposium
 - Temporary rule changes following the 2010 cold kill



2006: 5th Snook Symposium

Feb. 2006 – Snook Symposium V held at FWRI

- Results of 2006 stock assessment and stakeholder concerns discussed
- 180 Participants – diversity of stakeholders
- Many stakeholder concerns identified
- Following the symposium, a stakeholder-based Snook Workgroup was formed to make recommendations for long-term management



2006-2007: Workgroup

- 22 members representing various snook interests
- Met 5 times between July 2006 and March 2007

Recommendations:

- With stock SPRs around 25%, the workgroup recommended keeping with the target of 40% SPR
- Chose 3 preferred options for the Atlantic, and 2 preferred options for the Gulf to increase SPR to 40% based on predicted model outcomes



Other Workgroup Recommendations

- FWC should work with other agencies to preserve habitat
- Raise snook stamp fee to a minimum of \$10
- Repeal shoreline exemption
- Increase law enforcement presence
- Evaluate the viability of stock enhancement programs
- Improve data collection
- Conduct research needed on release mortality
- Include proper handling and release techniques in FWC publications
- Allow more than one cast net onboard vessels targeting snook



2007: Rulemaking Following Symposium and Workgroup

Jan. – March 2007: public workshops

- Online and targeted FWC surveys

Feb. 2007: Commission update

Mar. 2007: Workgroup Final Recommendations

- Gulf: 28-33” slot, bag = 1, closed Dec.–Feb. and May–Aug.
- Atlantic: 28-32” slot, bag = 1, closed 2nd half of Dec.–Jan. and June–Aug.
- Allow more than one cast net on board vessels targeting snook

April 2007: Draft rule approved by Commission

June 2007: Final rule approved by Commission



Current Snook Regulations

Statewide

- **Allowable Gear:** Hook and line
- **Bag Limit:** 1 per harvester per day
- Snook permit required
- No commercial harvest

Gulf

- **Slot Limit:** 28 – 33 inches
- **Closed Seasons:** Dec. 1 – end of Feb., and May 1 – Aug. 31

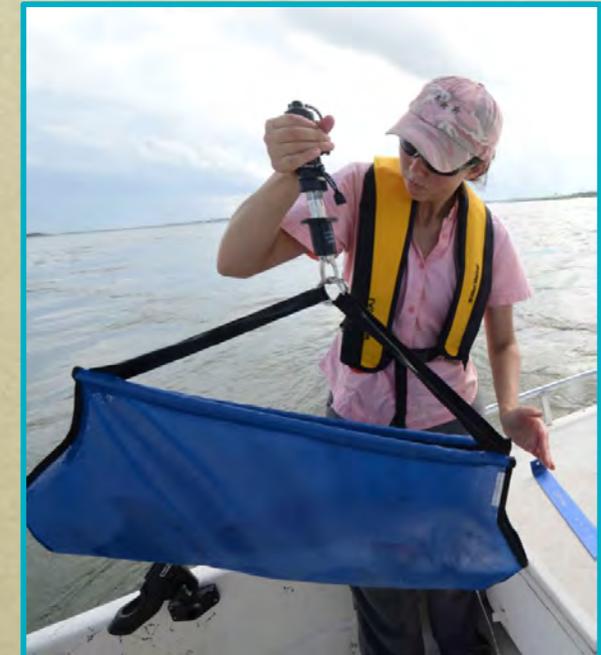
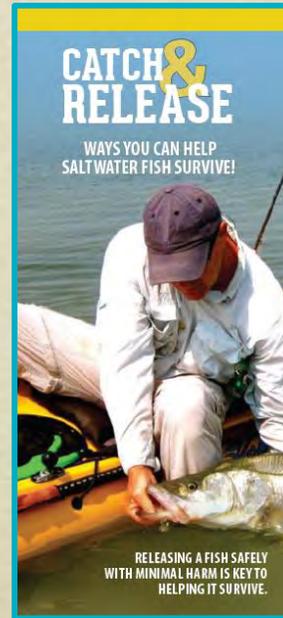
Atlantic

- **Slot Limit:** 28 – 32 inches
- **Closed Seasons:** Dec. 15 – Jan. 31, and June 1 – Aug. 31

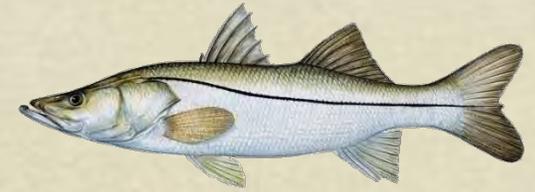


Other outcomes from Snook Workgroup and Workshops in 2006 and 2007

- Snook permit increase from \$2 to \$10
 - Led by Snook and Gamefish Foundation (SGF)
- Shoreline license exemption repealed
- New ideas for snook research
 - Effects of release mortality
 - Viability of stock enhancement
- Increased angler participation in data collection such as through the SGF Angler Action program
- Snook sling developed by West Palm Beach Fishing Club
- FWC catch and release outreach
- FWC and stakeholder involvement in habitat restoration projects



January 2010 Cold Kill



- The unseasonably cold January 2010 temperatures resulted in widespread fish kills throughout the state
- Concerns over the high numbers of snook reported dead prompted the FWC to issue a series of executive orders extending closed seasons for snook
- Closure aimed at:
 - Protecting surviving snook during their spring reproductive season
 - Providing FWC time to evaluate the effects on the snook population



Temporary Cold Kill-Related Snook Management Actions

Jan. 2010 – Executive Order (E.O.) closed harvest statewide through Aug. 31, 2010

Aug. 2010 – E.O. extended statewide closure through Sept. 16, 2010

Sept. 2010 – E.O. reopened Atlantic Sept. 17 – Dec. 15, 2010, extended Gulf closure, and closed statewide harvest Jan. 2011 – Aug. 31, 2011

Sept. 2011 – E.O. extended Gulf closure from Sept. 1 – Aug. 31, 2012

- Atlantic seasons opened as normal

Sept. 2012 – E.O. extended Gulf closure from Sept. 1 – Aug. 31, 2013

- Atlantic seasons opened as normal

Sept. 2013 – 2012 E.O. allowed to expire

- Both Atlantic and Gulf seasons opened as normal

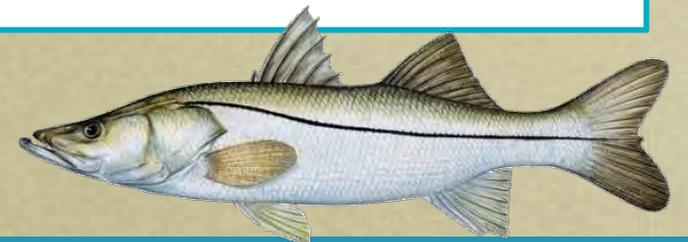
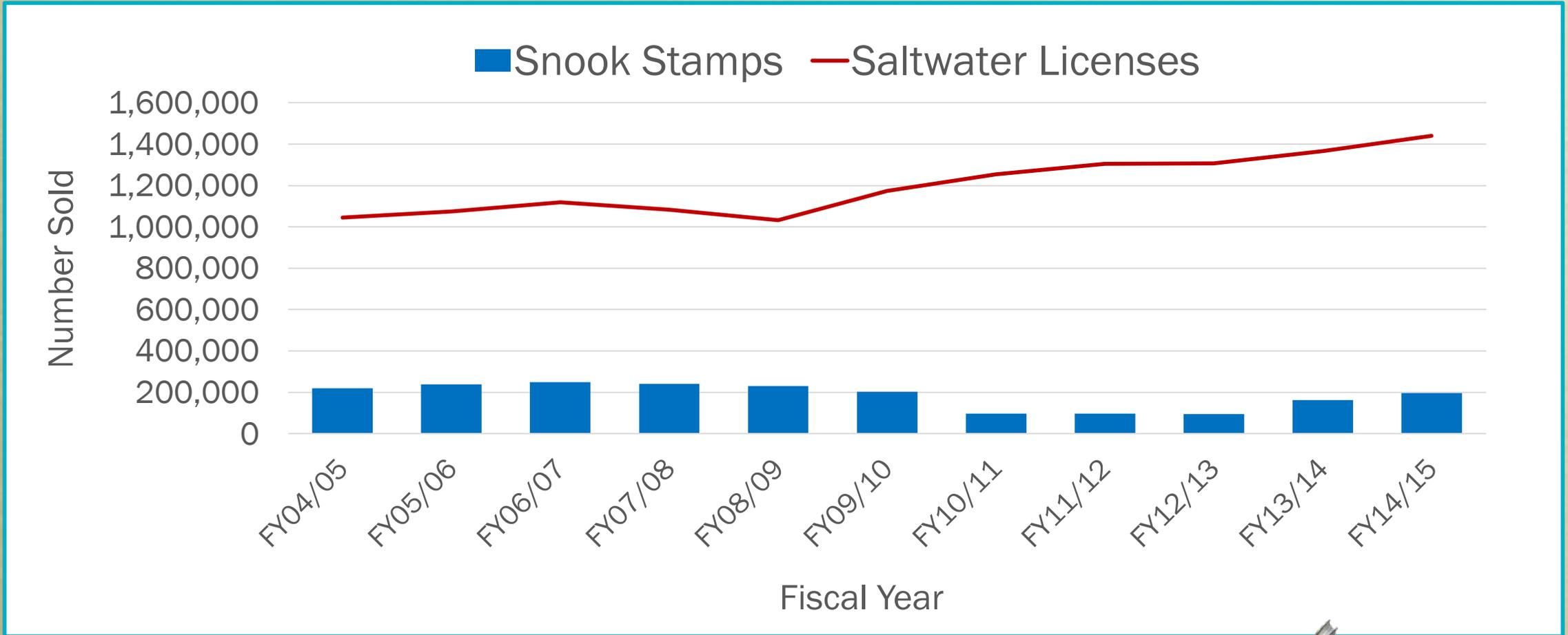


Snook Stamp

- 1989 Legislature created the snook stamp
- Any person that must have a fishing license must have a snook stamp to keep a snook
- Even with the no-cost shoreline license, a snook stamp is required to harvest snook
- Monies generated by stamp solely benefit snook populations by expanding research and management
- Prior to July 1, 2010, cost was \$2
 - Increased to \$10 on July 1, 2010



Recreational Licenses and Snook Stamp Sales



Snook Stamp Refunds

- Following the 2010 cold kill event and emergency closure, Commission offered refunds for snook stamp between September and October of that year
- 40 snook stamp refunds issued
 - ✓ 12 were \$2.00 refunds
 - ✓ 28 were \$10.00 refunds
- \$304 refunded



Conclusion - A Management Success Story

- Regulatory changes put in place in 2007 helped the snook stock achieve or exceed the goal of 40% SPR
- Snook stocks on both coasts are rebuilding again toward achievement of the management goal following the 2010 cold kill
 - Regulations in place since 2007 provided a buffer to the population
- Snook stamp increase to \$10 and removal of shoreline exemption have generated more money for dedicated research, leading to more robust stock assessment
- Today: Opportunities for improvement



Next Steps: Timeline for Management

Today: Symposium

After Today: Stakeholder Survey

- Will identify yourself or another to represent your interests in small group discussions

Early 2016: Small group discussions

Mid-2016: Public workshops

Nov. 2016: Commission Meeting



What Type of Fishery Do You Want?

- **Sustainable** – need a cushion for cold kills and red tides
- **Harvestable** – I want to catch fish to eat
- **Catch and release only** – philosophically opposed to harvest
- **Trophy fishery** – opportunity to consistently catch large fish
- **Abundant population** – I want a high catch rate
- **Regionalized fishery** – manage by major estuary
- **Management goals** – maintain 40% SPR goal on both coasts
- **Other?**



How Do We Get There?





FWC Habitat Restoration

Division of Habitat and Species Conservation (HSC)

- Designs estuarine restoration projects

2009-2015: Harbor Branch Mangrove Marsh

- 178 acre mangrove restoration in Indian River Lagoon
- FWC received \$1 million grant to complete project

2015: Grassy Flats

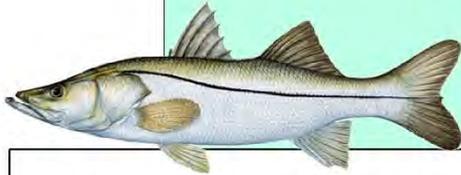
- Seagrass, mangrove, salt marsh, and oyster habitat
- Collaborative project – FWC helped \$770,000 towards project

DMFM and HSC

- Comment on major construction (inlet dredging, Everglades restoration, etc.) to ensure marine fish and habitats are least affected
- Work with water managers on preferred delivery to estuaries



Snook Management Regions



Snook Management Zones



Atlantic Region

All state and federal waters of the Atlantic Ocean north and east of the Dade-Monroe County line, and all inland waters of the counties encompassed by the St. Johns River Water Management District, and the South Florida Water Mgmt District, except Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Highlands, Lee, and Monroe Counties, but including all waters of Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River



Gulf Region

All state and federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the inland waters of Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Highlands, Lee, Monroe Counties, and all counties encompassed by the Southwest Florida Water Mgmt District, the Suwannee River Water Mgmt District, and the Northwest Florida Water Mgmt District, and all waters of Everglades National Park, but excluding all waters of Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River



State Water Boundary

State waters extend from shore to 9 nautical miles (nm) in the Gulf and from shore to 3 nm in the Atlantic



Everglades National Park



Lake Okeechobee - Kissimmee River

