



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting
November 18 – 19, 2015
Panama City, FL
Minutes

*A digital recording of the entire meeting is available upon request. Please contact the Community Relations Office at (850) 488-4676 for additional information.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held its regular meeting November 18 – 19, 2015, at the Majestic Beach Resort, located at 10901 Front Beach Road, Panama City Beach. Chairman Brian Yablonski called the meeting to order with the following members in attendance:

Ronald Bergeron, Fort Lauderdale
Chuck Roberts, Tallahassee
Bo Rivard, Panama City

Aliese Priddy, Immokalee
Robert Spottswood, Key West
Richard Hanas, Oviedo

Senior and Presenting Staff:

Nick Wiley	Executive Director
Eric Sutton	Assistant Executive Director
Bud Vielhauer	General Counsel
Colonel Curtis Brown	Director, Division of Law Enforcement
Ernie Marks	Director, South Region
Thomas Graef	Director, Southwest Region
Steve Shea	Director, Northwest Region
Shannon Wright	Director, Northeast Region
Chris Wynn	Director, North Central Region
Diane Eggeman	Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management
Tom Champeau	Director, Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management
Jessica McCawley	Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Gil McRae	Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
Dr. Thomas Eason	Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Doc Kokol	Director, Office of Strategic Initiatives
Melissa Recks	Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Martha Bademan	Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Kipp Frohlich	Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Paul Scharine	Division of Hunting and Game Management
David Johnson	Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Melissa Tucker	Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Dr. Brad Gruver	Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

There were sixty-two individuals registered to speak to the Commission during the two-day meeting.

Meeting Opening

Chairman Yablonski called the November 18 – 19, 2015 meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Invocation

Mr. Tom Champeau, Director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management, gave the invocation.

Presentation of Colors and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Chairman Yablonski introduced the Arnold High School Naval JROTC who presented the colors and Commissioner Rivard led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

Upon a motion by Commissioner Hanas, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the November 2015 Meeting agenda was approved.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bergeron, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the November 2015 Consent Agenda items were approved with the exception of item 3, Miami Tiger Beetle Biological Review Group, which was deferred until a future meeting.

Special Recognition

Chairman Yablonski recognized several military partners who were in attendance at the meeting and invited them to address the Commission. He provided information on the benefits of the conservation efforts provided by these military partners.

Colonel Johnson with Eglin Air Force Base addressed the Commission and introduced two individuals who coordinate the conservation efforts on base. He noted a recent conservation effort related to artificial reefs off of Okaloosa County and highlighted the long standing partnership between Eglin Air Force Base and FWC, formerly the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. He commended FWC for being proactive on conservation issues and for working to reduce possible negative effects of future actions.

Commander Huggan with the Naval Support Activity Station addressed the Commission. He highlighted the partnership with FWC and the positive aspect of having an FWC office on base. The cross training opportunity due to this co-location is invaluable. He also noted the artificial reef efforts taking place with the Naval Support Activity Station in Panama City.

Executive Petty Officer Roberts with the United States Coast Guard echoed the previous comments on the co-located office on the Naval Support Activity Station providing major benefits for all entities involved.

Executive Director Wiley commented on the Governor's efforts to ensure that Florida is the most military friendly state in the United States.

Chairman Yablonski commented on FWC's efforts to recruit those who served or are serving in the United States Armed Forces. He asked for all individuals present at the meeting who served or are serving in the Armed Forces to stand and be recognized.

Commissioner Bergeron commented on the wonderful partnership to protect the environment and also protect the people of Florida and the United States.

Commissioner Rivard thanked everyone for attending the meeting in Panama City. He also noted the important partnership with Tyndall Air Force Base who was unable to have a representative at the meeting. He added comments on the positive economic impact created by the military installations in this area.

Finally, Chairman Yablonski asked Colonel Curtis Brown to present an award to a local Law Enforcement (LE) Officer.

Colonel Brown recognized Officer David Brady and presented the Award of Valor, Purple Heart, and a new award, the Officer Survival Badge. Colonel thanked the partner agencies that helped apprehend the suspects in the recent incident involving Officer Brady.

Commissioner Bergeron noted that listening to the story and walking through what happened with Officer Brady shows the dedication of all LE staff who protect the public and natural resources. He thanked all those who serve and protect.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Wiley highlighted the following items from the Executive Director's report:

- Gulf Reef Fish survey update
- Apalachicola oyster update
- Bear management update
- Captive wildlife inspections
- Staff recognition – Officer Eric Fletcher
- Staff recognition – Charmaine Williams
- Staff recognition – Derek Fussell

Chairman Yablonski noted a proposed effort for partnership in addressing waste management efforts surrounding wildlife conflicts.

Commissioner Bergeron requested that staff continue to work with interested parties on waste management and continue with updates at future meetings.

Commissioner Spottswood recommended a pilot program in the area currently experiencing these conflict incidents. He noted that a pilot program could be supported by a smaller portion of money than a statewide approach but could commence more quickly.

Executive Director Wiley responded that staff are already working on several proposals and he will coordinate the guidance from the Commission with staff to continue making progress on this issue.

Chairman Yablonski asked the Commission for approval for Executive Director Wiley to move forward with dealing with partners and the legislative process.

Vice Chairman Priddy asked about the capability of waste management trucks to accept the bear resistant trash cans.

Executive Director Wiley asked for a quick update from Dr. Eason on the progress with this factor of the issue.

Dr. Eason responded that having the appropriate technology on the trucks to accept the bear resistant cans is not complete at this time, but staff are working on alternatives to alleviate this issue and are coordinating with the waste management companies on this.

Chairman Yablonski asked the Commission for feedback on captive venomous reptiles being allowed in Florida.

Vice Chairman Priddy commented that the number of resources needed for captive venomous reptile issues outweigh the benefits of having this program.

Executive Director Wiley noted that staff will work with stakeholders involved with captive venomous reptiles and bring forward options for changes to this program at the April 2016 meeting at the earliest.

Strategic Follow-Up – Innovations in Marine Fisheries

Ms. Jessica McCawley, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, presented an update on efforts undertaken to gather public input about where marine fisheries management staff should focus their efforts in coming years. As part of the Commission focal area on Marine Fisheries Innovations, staff conducted an online survey of fishery stakeholders and 19 public workshops around the state to gain insight into which issues and species are of greatest interest or concern to FWC stakeholders. Ms. McCawley presented regional and statewide results of the survey and workshops and highlighted which suggestions were chosen for incorporation into the 2016/2017 marine fisheries workplan and which suggestions staff has already begun addressing.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Yablonski asked if there were ideas presented today that may be easiest to implement or incorporate into the management aspect of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management.

Ms. McCawley responded that website updates and reorganization is one of the easiest and quickest suggestions to take on and is one of the changes currently being implemented based on these workshops.

Commissioner Roberts asked about the idea of standardized bag limits and how the concept of discard mortality was discussed in the workshops. He also asked about where the water quality concerns were addressed. He asked Jessica to detail the stakeholder concerns on Cobia related to the panhandle stakeholder meetings. Commissioner Roberts also asked if the concern over Red Drum was related to bag limits and what the discussion of triggerfish in the Panhandle was regarding.

Ms. McCawley replied that this concept of standardized bag limits is not new to the Commission or the Councils. It could be suggested to apply this to a particular species, or it could be applied to a group of species such as reef fish. The idea would be to change the aggregate or create a standardized bag limit for all types of reef fish species or possibly size limits which may help regulations be easier to remember for stakeholders. McCawley stated that stakeholders were interested in ways to reduce the estimates of discard mortality figured into stock assessments. She noted that comments about water quality were mostly heard in the Keys workshops but also some along the east coast. There is a stakeholder group working to provide visitors with additional education on water quality in the Keys and the effects of tourism on these environments. The concerns over Cobia are regarding spawning in the Panhandle, and these concerns have been raised more in the last two to three years. McCawley commented that Red Drum concerns were related to the bag limit and providing a more conservative approach to this fishery. Finally, she stated that the stakeholder concern with triggerfish in the Gulf of Mexico is that what stakeholders see on the water is not matching the results of the stock assessment.

Commissioner Spottswood thanked the Marine Fisheries team on the effort involved with this. He noted that the discussions on water quality are not mentioning water flow and Florida Bay enough. He stated he would like to understand FWC's level of engagement related to water flow in South Florida. He suggested FWC focus on reallocation and the ability to reallocate between sectors in the middle of the year as needed, for example in the Yellowtail Snapper fishery. He asked about the conversation on Blackfin Tuna that came up at the workshops and whether stakeholders were concerned about the species.

Ms. McCawley responded that stakeholders have raised concerns about Blackfin Tuna in the past couple of years. She stated there are no species-specific regulations for Blackfin Tuna.

Commissioner Hanas noted concern about the collection of data to manage the species in the State of Florida. He asked if suggested ways to improve data collection were mentioned at any of the workshops or if staff have any new ideas.

Ms. McCawley replied that stakeholders are always interested in data collection and would like to report their recreational catches via mobile applications. She noted that FWC is working proactively with other partners to initiate more ways to use citizen science and collect data in a statistically rigorous way that could be used in the management of species throughout the state.

Commissioner Roberts noted that citizen science may be the most impactful aspect of data collection and this agency should find a way to utilize this option to increase the effectiveness of management.

Commissioner Bergeron supported the comments of Commission Spottswood related to water flow and habitat management.

Vice Chairman Priddy asked about participation in the online survey compared to attendance at the in-person workshops and the type of feedback received from each. She noted her disappointment related to the low number of individuals that participated in these workshops.

Ms. McCawley noted that the in-person workshops did have lower participation numbers; however, individuals may not necessarily participate unless they have specific concerns about management of certain species, or they could have been out of town during the time of the workshop. She noted that more information is gathered at the in-person workshops because of the one-on-one discussions that can cover multiple topics.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Bill Tucker, commercial fisherman out of Dunedin, Florida, addressed the Commission. He thanked the Commission for conducting these workshops and requested that his comments captured in the summary report of these workshops be edited to reflect that he is opposed to sector reallocation and the five-state plan, not sector separation. From the majority of the workshops he noted a common theme of an increase in fishing pressure depleting some major species.

Mr. Bob Zales, Northwest Florida Director of the Florida Guides Association, addressed the Commission. He spoke of the interest in recreational catch data. He noted the request in the past for log books to help with the collection of data. This would require 100% accuracy and compliance, which would be difficult to attain. He mentioned other states processes to collect data and their difference when compared to the federal system most of the time to the benefit of fishermen. The Florida Gulf Reef Fish Survey is a good step in collecting more accurate recreational fishing data.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Yablonski responded that a presentation on Florida Bay could be arranged for a future meeting.

Commissioner Spottswood responded that having the Florida Bay presentation in South Florida would be a positive effort by the agency.

Chairman Yablonski asked Ms. McCawley to select 5 of the ideas in the presentation and bring back an update on progress at a future meeting.

Executive Director Wiley noted that regarding Commissioner Spottswood's comments for Yellowtail Snapper, staff can get feedback on how we might be able to work through the Councils.

Staff Reports

Red Snapper Regional Management

Ms. Martha Bademan with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management presented information about and requested direction on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) proposal for red snapper regional management (also known as Reef Fish Amendment 39).

Commission Discussion

Chairman Yablonski asked Executive Director Wiley to provide an update on proposed federal legislation that proposes another option for regional management of the Gulf red snapper fishery.

Executive Director Wiley noted he recently provided testimony on House of Representatives Bill 3094 (H.R. 3094) – Gulf States Red Snapper Authority Management Act. He noted that staff are committed to working with the other Gulf States towards a finalized bill that is an acceptable outcome for all stakeholders.

Commissioner Roberts commented that FWC has to be involved in these discussions with the other Gulf States and federal representatives in order to ensure Florida is not negatively affected by any decisions on red snapper management.

Lunch break

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Mike Colby with the Clearwater Marine Association addressed the Commission. He noted initial public comments at a St. Petersburg meeting from about a year and a half ago related to regional management were supportive of the concept, but based on the Council's current proposal, many recent public comments have been in opposition to regional management. He was also concerned about H.R. 3094. He noted concern regarding funding of red snapper data collection and stock assessments if it is delegated to the states.

Mr. Scott Robson with Destin Charter Boat Association (DCBA) addressed the Commission. He stated that if regional management moves forward, he noted support of Action two, Alternative two, which would allow federally-permitted for-hire vessels continue to be managed by the GMFMC.

Mr. Bob Zales II representing Florida Guides Association (FGA) addressed the Commission in support of the concept of regional management, but noted that the Council's current plan would likely not provide relief to recreational anglers.

Captain Mike Eller with DCBA addressed the Commission in opposition to regional management (Amendment 39). He stated that more people are fishing in Florida as opposed to other Gulf states and Florida would receive a smaller allocation than is deserved based on the number of fishermen and the historical catch. He noted the efforts in place for electronic log books on charter boats to help improve the data collection in the recreational fishery.

Mr. Douglas Kyle Lowe with DCBA addressed the Commission in opposition to Amendment 39. He requested that if the Commission support regional management options for private anglers only and exclude federally-permitted for-hire vessels from regional management.

Mr. Mike Graef addressed the Commission with a request to exclude federally-permitted for-hire vessels from regional management.

Mr. Jerry Anderson addressed the Commission with a request for federally-permitted for-hire vessels to remain under federal management and be excluded from regional management. He requested better data collection for the recreational fishery.

Mr. Bill Tucker addressed the Commission and requested the Commission only support regional management for private recreational anglers only while removing federally-permitted for-hire vessels from the proposal. He noted his concern about a lack of access to contact information for Commissioners and availability to meet or speak on the phone about regional management or other topics. He voiced concern over Executive Director Wiley participating in the Congressional hearing on H.R. 3094 without input from the commercial fishery.

Vice Chairman Priddy asked for clarification on whether this discussion should be related to the recreational sector of the fishery or the commercial sector of the fishery.

Executive Director Wiley noted FWC's support for the commercial fishery and the current IFQ system.

Commissioner Rivard noted that he would be happy to coordinate with the public on requests to discuss topics related to Commission decisions.

Mr. Eric Brazer, Deputy Director of the Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance, addressed the Commission. He noted commercial fishermen support the request of federally-permitted for-hire fishermen to remain under federal management and not be included in regional management. He added that H.R. 3094 could have major impacts to commercial businesses in Florida related to red snapper.

Mr. Ken Haddad with American Sportfishing Association addressed the Commission. He stated support for red snapper management by the states, but with Amendment 39, the lack of flexibility makes the Council's proposal difficult to support. He noted support for staff recommendation on Amendment 39 to continue to work with the other states on making the proposal more complete and fair. He requested that the federally-permitted for-hire sector and private recreational angling sector be handled as one unit.

Mr. James Zurbrick addressed the Commission and noted the three distinct sectors related to marine fisheries-commercial, federally-permitted charter for hire, and private recreational anglers. He requested that if the Commission support regional management, that the Commission support options that would exclude the federally-permitted for-hire sector from regional management.

Mr. Garrett Alberts addressed the Commission and added support for the previous speaker's comments.

Mr. Mark Kelley addressed the Commission with thanks to the Commissioners for thinking about the charter businesses of Florida who are affected by decisions on regional management.

Mr. Jason Delacruz addressed the Commission with the request that federally-permitted for-hire vessels be excluded from the Council's regional management proposal. He added concerns about this proposal becoming a set of regulations and the difficulty in educating the public on this very intricate topic.

Mr. Trip Aukeman with Coastal Conservation Association addressed the Commission. He requested Commission direct staff to continue working on Amendment 39 and regional management to achieve better outcomes for Florida.

Mr. Michael Sullivan addressed the Commission in opposition of regional management as presented today because of the many uncertainties in the proposal.

Mr. Jerry Andrews with Pensacola Charter Boat Association (PCBA) addressed the Commission in opposition of Amendment 39 for federally-permitted for-hire vessels.

Mr. Sean Kelley with PCBA addressed the Commission. He noted that the majority of the business for Charter vessels are tourists and if the season gets shortened, it would have a negative impact on those businesses. If regional management does move forward, he requested federally-permitted for-hire vessels be excluded.

Mr. Russell Underwood addressed the Commission. He noted the importance of commercial fisheries on many businesses in Florida.

Mr. Stewart Miller addressed the Commission in opposition of regional management as presented today.

Mr. TJ George, Jr., addressed the Commission in support of federal management for federally-permitted for-hire vessels.

Mr. Benjamin Barbee addressed the Commission in opposition to Amendment 39 for federally-permitted for-hire vessels.

Mr. Chrisat Couvillion addressed the Commission in opposition to Amendment 39. He provided options for each of the individual points under consideration by the Council as presented by staff.

Ms. Candy Hansard with Emerald Coast Reef Association addressed the Commission in opposition of the Council's regional management plan as presented due to the lack of control and flexibility by the state.

Mr. Mark Tryon addressed the Commission. He suggested management options for the recreational fishery including creating a slot limit and possibly using tags or trophy tags for harvest of this species.

Mr. TJ Marshall addressed the Commission. He noted that Council members are frustrated with this proposal and if the Commission withdraws support then this proposal would likely not move forward.

Commission Discussion

Executive Director Wiley noted that the staff recommendation is provided with a request for guidance, and added that the current proposal provided by the Council needs additional discussion to make this a more comprehensive approach to management of the recreational red snapper fishery.

Commissioner Roberts added that all sectors are important to the Florida economy and this Commission. Moving forward, he explained that the Commission does not want to take away any opportunity from any specific sector as long as the fishery is growing and is sustainable.

Commissioner Spottswood noted that he is in favor of states having more control over its fisheries, but not in favor of the regional management proposal presented today. He commented that as written, Amendment 39 is not good for the State of Florida.

Commissioner Roberts asked if the state-permitted for-hire vessels can opt out of regional management. He requested that Florida look at separation for each of the sectors of the fishery so that any changes do not have unintended consequences on other sectors.

Ms. Bademan responded that the state-permitted for-hire vessels would be affected by any season length changes resulting from regional management. She was unsure if the state-permitted for-hire vessels could opt out, but would check on those options.

Chairman Yablonski asked Martha what she needs from the Commission to move forward without negatively impacting any of the red snapper fishery sectors.

Ms. Bademan replied that the ability to assess the decisions and discussions at the Council meetings in correlation with the Commission's preference not to negatively impact the red snapper fishery sectors.

Commissioner Rivard asked for clarification on private angler feedback on this proposal. He suggested that sector separation should continue in this proposal so that no one in Florida is fishing less this year than last year.

Executive Director Wiley reminded the Commission that past direction was to not support sector separation because it was pitting portions of the fishery against each other and was not a productive management tool for Florida. He noted the only reason to keep dialogue open on regional management is because of the private boats portion of the recreational fishery which continues to be restricted year after year. If Florida can gain the ability to manage the recreational fishery as a whole, FWC can come up with a better way to provide the opportunities to private anglers.

Commissioner Roberts agrees that Amendment 39 cannot be supported as written. He asked if H.R. 3094 would be affected if the Council receives opposition to Amendment 39. He stated that the FWC would need to inform Florida legislators to be sure that Florida fishermen lose no opportunities if the bill moves forward.

Chairman Yablonski agreed with this summary.

Vice Chairman Priddy noted that it appears Florida is being punished for asking for regional management of the recreational fishery. She also asked about the potential electronic logbook for charter captains. She also asked about how other states are impacted by allocation decisions in regional management and whether the other states are supportive of the options in Amendment 39.

Ms. Bademan noted that she will address the electronic logbook reporting for charter captains in the Gulf Council presentation. She spoke to different state seasons under Council Decision #4 Option A from the presentation and commented that all of the Gulf States were supportive of the option to manage both private anglers and federally-permitted for-hire vessels under regional management. She reminded the Commission that this is a very difficult decision for the Council, and we have an opportunity to opt out of regional management if it ends up looking bad for the State of Florida.

Chairman Yablonski recommended that Ms. Bademan take this guidance to the January Council meeting and ensure that Florida doesn't get put in a bad position with regional management and make decisions on any proposal brought up during the Council meeting. He stated that the Commission does not support Amendment 39 as currently constructed. He requested the Commission allow Ms. Bademan flexibility to continue to work within the Council process on regional management to achieve a better outcome for Florida fishermen.

Mutton Snapper

Ms. McCawley presented a summary of stakeholder concerns about mutton snapper regulations and provided a series of management changes for the recreational and commercial mutton snapper fisheries for Commission discussion.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Bob Zales with the Florida Guides Association addressed the Commission in support of the staff recommendation with the request that because this fishery is healthy, any changes be minimal. He requested FWC take control of this fishery.

Mr. Ken Haddad with the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) addressed the Commission in support of a proactive approach to management of this species. However, the protections should be tied to peak spawning months only. He noted support for FWC taking the lead on management changes for this species.

Mr. Trip Aukeman with the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida addressed the Commission with a request to coordinate with the South Atlantic Council to analyze the effects of prohibiting harvest of this species during the spawning season before a position can be provided by CCA. He expressed support for reducing recreational bag limits and implementing a commercial trip limit.

Mr. TJ Marshall addressed the Commission and noted that the current bag limit is too large. He suggested that a 3 fish per person bag limit year round would be appropriate and would reduce confusion. He suggested a workshop specifically for the commercial long-line fleet working out of Madeira Beach area.

Mr. Eric Brazer addressed the Commission and cautioned that a commercial trip limit would not reduce mortality of the species, but instead lead to unintended discards from the longline fishery.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Spottswood supports staff recommendation based on the stakeholder comment he has personally heard. He requested that, in addition to the items presented by staff, he would like the public to be presented with the option of a bag limit of five or fewer fish year round. He requested additional information from staff about the longline fishery.

Vice Chairman Priddy requested that an option to have a lower bag limit year-round be included in the options for public comment because it would be a simpler regulation.

Commissioner Bergeron commented that the more we can streamline the regulations for stakeholders the better.

Chairman Yablonski asked that the commissioners' suggestions be included in the items taken out for public comment, including the possibility for a partial or total closure at Western Dry Rocks.

Ms. McCawley explained that Mutton Snapper is typically a bycatch product from longline fishers targeting Grouper. She said staff would be sure to reach out specifically to this stakeholder group and will come back with additional information on that fishery related to this species, as requested.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Report

Ms. Bademan presented a report on actions taken at the GMFMC meeting on October 5 – 9, 2015 in Galveston, Texas. Topics included gag grouper, other reef fish, data collection and mackerel. Staff requested direction on state consistency with recent federal recreational greater amberjack and red grouper season closures.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Bill Kelly addressed the Commission noting concern with the assessment and analysis on king mackerel stock assessment which indicated poor recruitment, causing a decrease in the annual catch limit. He commented on the negative impact of the yellowtail snapper closure and stated his desire to change the commercial fishing year.

Captain Mike Eller addressed the Commission noting the importance to close the recreational seasons on species such as greater amberjack and red grouper because of MRIP data extrapolations done by NOAA Fisheries so that the next year's season is not shortened due to paybacks.

Mr. Bill Tucker addressed the Commission regarding commercial IFQ modifications. He requested the Commission direct staff to leave the IFQ program as is and not support any changes. He advised that the Council has been working to create a Recreational Advisory Panel and asked for the Commission support the Council in this endeavor.

Mr. Eric Brazer addressed the Commission and agreed with the comments of the previous speaker.

Mr. Trip Aukeman addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation on closing Gulf state waters to recreational harvest of greater amberjack and red grouper. He noted that CCA is working with a group of recreational anglers and an advisory panel would not be helpful at this time.

Mr. TJ Marshall addressed the Commission with caution regarding leaving state waters open to recreational harvest of red grouper for the remainder of 2015 based on the potential consequences for the 2016 season. He noted support for staff recommendation on closing both species for the remainder of 2015.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Roberts noted ending the current seasons early without fishermen having notice of state waters closures may have more of a negative impact than knowing in advance of an overage and having a reduced season in future years which would allow advance notice to the public on early closures.

Commissioner Rivard asked about closing the season for the remainder of this year and the ramifications of any quota overages in future seasons if the Commission chose not to close state waters for the remainder of 2015. He asked how many days would recreational seasons be shortened for next year if the quota for 2015 is exceeded.

Ms. Bademan responded with an explanation of what NOAA Fisheries takes into account for future seasons if recreational anglers reach or exceed the annual catch limit. The number of federal waters recreational fishing days is reliant upon how quickly the quota is being caught. She noted that the data for both species are collected through the MRIP process and are several months behind actual time, and therefore, once more up-to-date information is received, NOAA Fisheries can provide the estimates of if the recreational annual catch limit was met or exceeded in 2015. In addition, NOAA Fisheries will be tracking recreational harvest rates for red grouper or greater amberjack in 2016 as data becomes available to estimate if an early closure may be necessary.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Rivard, seconded by Commissioner Bergeron and carried, the Commission approved the closure of Gulf state waters for recreational harvest of greater amberjack for the remainder of 2015 while allowing the harvest of red grouper to continue in Gulf state waters for the remainder of 2015.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Report

Ms. McCawley presented a report on actions from the SAFMC's September 14-18 meeting in Hilton Head, SC. Topics include: multiple snapper grouper species. Staff requested direction on potential management changes for dolphin and proposed spawning Special Management Zones off Florida. Staff was also requesting action on an executive order for gray triggerfish to drop the size limit to 12 inches for Atlantic state waters and the import size limit to 12 inches statewide until October 31, 2016. Staff was also recommending a 5-fish bag limit for gray triggerfish until October 31, 2016.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Bill Kelly with the Florida Keys Fishermen's Association addressed the Commission with several suggestions on topics related to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, including combining the recreational and commercial quota in the South Atlantic for the yellowtail fishery, setting a 1-square-mile closed area at Warsaw Hole, and reallocating quota from the recreational sector to the commercial sector in the dolphin fishery.

Mr. Trip Aukeman with the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) supported the establishment of a 2-square-mile closed area at Warsaw Hole. He requested that a trip limit be implemented in the commercial dolphin fishery.

Mr. Kenneth Hawkins addressed the Commission regarding the overabundance of triggerfish which are below the 14-inch size limit. He requested the Commission provide assistance to businesses and possibly allow a slot limit of 11 to 15 inches and a smaller bag limit of five fish.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Rivard asked about the average size of the triggerfish and the proposed bag limit of 5 fish. Changing the 100-lb. bag limit to five fish might be too drastic of a change and unnecessary. He asked if a larger bag limit would still meet the desires of the fishermen and the needs of the resource.

Ms. McCawley noted that charter captains specifically requested a 5-fish bag limit. This bag limit could prevent early closures of the fishery.

Commissioner Priddy recommended an increase to 10-fish bag limit until the stock assessment is completed in 2016.

Chairman Yablonski asked about the appropriate size for a closed area around Warsaw Hole. He asked if still being able to fish within the hole with a 1-square-mile area warranted a larger closed area.

Ms. McCawley noted that the area is actively fished, including along the ridgeline adjacent to the hole. Information about the seafloor outside of the 2-square-mile area is lacking. She noted that more of the feature is encompassed in the 2-square-mile boundary.

Commissioner Spottswood asked for more information about the dolphin commercial long-line fishery and its impacts on Florida's harvest in 2015.

Ms. McCawley noted that because of rule changes in other fisheries, commercial long-line vessels are now directly targeting dolphin in federal waters and international waters, whereas they previously only caught dolphin as bycatch. This caused the quota to be caught early and resulted in a closure of the fishery, which prevented Florida's fishermen from landing fish after June 30.

Commissioner Spottswood asked if a trip limit implemented after 65% of the quota is met would ensure that the fishery remained open for the entire year.

Ms. McCawley responded that this is unknown.

Commissioner Roberts suggested a dolphin commercial trip limit for the entire year.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Hanas and carried, the Commission approved a size limit of 12 inches and a bag limit of 10 fish per person for gray triggerfish through October 31, 2016 be enacted via Executive Order.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bergeron, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the Commission directed staff to support a 2-square-mile closure at Warsaw Hole.

Item Requiring Action

Draft Rule- Dwarf Seahorse – Ms. Melissa Recks with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management presented a proposed draft rule for the Dwarf Seahorse species.

Commissioner Bergeron asked for the annual harvest amount. He noted that the 25,000 quota would not affect industry's economics although the 15,000 quota would have a slight impact.

Commissioner Priddy asked for clarification in regard to preventing future expansion of the fishery.

Mrs. Recks clarified that the 25,000 quota was specific to the prevention of future expansion of the fishery.

Commissioner Hanas noted that this proposed action could keep this species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. William Samples with C & B Distributors addressed the Commission. He noted opposition to a closed season due to the abundance of this species in his opinion.

Mr. Clifford Gibbens with C & B Distributors addressed the Commission. He commented on the abundance of this species in his experience of collecting over the years. He also noted concern about seagrass in Florida Bay.

Mr. Kenneth Kull addressed the Commission in opposition to the staff proposal. He noted high abundance of this species.

Mr. Jeffrey Turner, President of the Florida Marine Life Association, addressed the Commission. He commented that the data are limited for this species. He noted concern that this filing by the Center for Biological Diversity to list the Dwarf Seahorse as Endangered is an effort to target seagrass habitat and has nothing to do with the Dwarf Seahorse. He noted support for the proposal.

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming with Defenders of Wildlife addressed the Commission. She noted support for the staff proposal. She encouraged the Commission to take a conservative approach for conservation and increase the data collection for this species.

Mr. Alan Maxwell with Sea Critters, Inc. addressed the Commission. He noted high abundance of this species in his experience of collecting. He commented that an environmental group with no scientific evidence can apply for a listing of the Endangered Species Act for this species placing the burden of proof on the Commission and the Federal agencies to conduct the research to prove or disprove this type of request. He voiced opposition to the proposed seasonal closure and the trip limit of 100 dwarf seahorses.

Ms. Mary Maxwell with Sea Critters, Inc. addressed the Commission with opposition to the proposal, except for the quota, which she supported. She noted high abundance of this species. She requested the Commission understand the need for real science related to this species.

Mr. Michael Helmholtz with Above the Reef addressed the Commission with opposition to this proposal. He noted the abundance of this species in his experience of collecting. He commented that the Dwarf Seahorse is not imperiled in his opinion.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy noted concern that the organization which requested the Dwarf Seahorse to be reviewed as an endangered species was not present to address the Commission. She appreciated the preemptive action to keep this species off the Endangered Species List.

Commissioner Priddy asked Mrs. Recks how often seahorses are harvested from federal waters versus state waters.

Mrs. Recks responded that the fishery operated in state waters but that the regulations would extend into federal waters. Commissioner Spottswood stated that he was especially persuaded by the public speakers on this item. He noted his respect for NOAA's request to be proactive on this item and acknowledged the difficulties to do so without scientific evidence. He voiced opposition to the seasonal closure.

Commissioner Rivard thanked everyone for speaking on this topic and for staff in drafting this proposal taking into consideration the many requests and motions filed at the federal level. He questioned that merit of the Endangered Species Act petition and noted the lack of scientific evidence.

Chairman Yablonski echoed the comments of other Commissioners and stakeholders related to lack of science on this matter.

Commissioner Bergeron noted that the initial staff proposal will not provide an economic impact to the stakeholders involved.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Priddy, seconded by Commissioner Spottswood, and with opposition by Commissioner Rivard, the Commission approved a daily commercial trip limit of 200 Dwarf Seahorses per person or per vessel (whichever is less), an annual commercial quota of 25,000 Dwarf Seahorses, the creation of an allowable harvest area that prohibit harvest north of Anclote Key on the Gulf coast and north of Jupiter Inlet on the Atlantic coast, and a reduction in the daily recreational bag limit for all seahorse species to 5 seahorses total per person.

Annual Workplan

This presentation was postponed until February 2016.

Strategic Follow-Up

This presentation was postponed until February 2016.

Staff Report –Deepwater Horizon Update

This presentation was postponed until February 2016.

Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

The following individuals registered to speak on items not listed on the agenda:

Mr. Andrew Adams with One Bear Nation addressed the Commission. He offered support with education and outreach on this issue. He requested a meeting with the staff involved in the black bear hunt.

Mr. Joe Pierce addressed the Commission with thanks for authorizing the hunt this year.

Mr. John Rosier, President of Dade County Fulltrack Conservation Club, addressed the Commission with thanks for the decisions being made with the need for science to back those decisions.

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming addressed the Commission and noted the need to clear up any confusion on the use of funds from the Conserve Wildlife tag.

Mr. Justin Leake with Panhandle Guides Association addressed the Commission regarding inshore fisheries, specifically redfish, sheepshead, and flounder. He noted that panhandle guides have seen a steady and steep decline of the numbers of sheepshead in the spring around the deep passes spawning and requested a seasonal reduction in the bag limit of Sheepshead during the spawn or an overall year round reduction in the bag limit. He noted self-imposed harvest limits through the Association. He also reported that the shift in effort to inshore fisheries has also increased effort on redfish which just happened to coincide with the increase in the bag limit to two fish per person or eight per vessel in the Panhandle. Since that started we have seen a steady decline in the redfish. He requested the redfish bag limit be reduced back to one fish per person.

Chairman Yablonski noted there are planned stock assessments coming up in 2016 on both redfish and sheepshead.

Mr. Eric Brazer addressed the Commission and thanked the Commission for taking that time to listen to the commercial fishermen today.

Ms. Candy Hansard addressed the Commission in regards to lionfish and requested the Commission give the Emerald Coast Reef Association permission to try their proposed pilot program.

Executive Director Wiley explained that the Division of Marine Fisheries Management has been working with Ms. Hansard on her proposal, but that any potential implementation would be complicated because the proposal included elements related reef fish which are subject to management under federal regulations.

Commissioner Priddy asked Ms. Hansard to work with Jessica McCawley to see if there are other things that FWC can do, beyond the proactive measures already taken, to address the lionfish issue.

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission regarding the Florida black bear hunt.

Mr. Brett Martina addressed the Commission regarding redfish and the need for additional conservation efforts. He reported seeing a steady decrease in the redfish population in the past three years in the Apalachicola/Alligator Harbor area. He also requested the agency review the out of state guide license to help local businesses.

Mr. Chris Robinson addressed the Commission echoing comments of the previous speaker and reported that he does not see the upper slot redfish in the inshore waters. He stated that inshore fishing has tripled in the last couple years and that the decline in the redfish has come at a time of a bad red tide that has killed numerous large males.

Mr. Scott Robson with DCBA addressed the Commission. He proposed that Cobia be added to the Florida Gamefish status and create a slot limit similar to redfish and snook.

Mr. Todd Hallman with the Florida Sportsman's Conservation Association addressed the Commission with appreciation for approving the bear hunt.

Commissioner Exchange

Commissioner Roberts thanked staff for carrying out direction from the Commission at recent meetings.

Chairman Yablonski requested the remainder of this discussion be deferred until day two.

Recess Wednesday's Portion of the Meeting

Chairman Yablonski adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, November 19, 2015.

Thursday, November 19, Reconvene

Chairman Yablonski reconvened the meeting at 8:36 a.m.

Adoption of Minutes

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Hanas and carried, the September 2015 minutes were approved as written.

Special Recognition

Dr. Thomas Eason, Director of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, presented the 2015 Mark J. Reef Memorial Award from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to Ms. Claire Sunquist Blunden.

Florida Youth Conservation Center Network (FYCCN) Update

Mr. Doc Kokol, Director of the Office of Strategic Initiatives, presented an update on FYCCN efforts.

Commissioner Rivard recognized several local guests in attendance at the meeting in reference to this agenda item.

- Superintendent of Schools, Bill Husfelt
- Executive Director of Bay County Schools, Denise Kelly
- District Safety and Security Chief, Mike Jones
- Bay County Sherriff's Office Major Tommy Ford
- Bay County Commission representative Jim Muller

Mr. Kokol invited Mr. Chase Yarborough, Northwest Partnership Coordinator with FYCCN, to present details on local efforts related to FYCCN in Bay County.

Mr. Yarborough detailed the recent activities that will help grow the youth efforts in the panhandle.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Bergeron requested to look at the proposed building plans for the Everglades Youth Conservation Center Camp to see how he can help move this process forward.

Chairman Yablonski reminded everyone of the success over the last 10 years on this topic. He also noted the many unique opportunities that are available to youth through this network.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this item:

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission with a request to increase more of the arts in these FYCCN programs and possibly less physical activity. She recommended partnering with Arbor Day to focus on habitat rehabilitation and many of the other activities related to conservation and plant/animal identification.

Strategic Follow-Up

Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP)– Dr. Brad Gruver, Section Leader within the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, presented the draft ISMP, a summary of associated draft rule revisions, and several draft species guidelines.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this item:

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission with a request to include tunnels under roadways in this plan.

Executive Director Wiley responded on the coordinated efforts with partner agencies to address roadway tunnels.

Ms. Danielle Whitehill addressed the Commission with questions on why the bear was not added to the list of species of special concern.

Dr. Eason commented on the process which removed the bear from the Imperiled Species list.

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming addressed the Commission with support of this plan from Defenders of Wildlife. She noted concerns for the aversive conditioning guidelines, and will continue to work with staff on that issue. She hopes that this will continue to move forward.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell, Director of Wildlife Conservation with Audubon Florida, addressed the Commission. She noted the importance of this plan and thanked the staff for using the science on species such as the chipmunk and the alligator snapping turtle. She noted support for staff recommendation.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked if there was a specific procedure for stakeholders to request review of a species that they feel would meet the listing criteria for state listing protections.

Dr. Gruver responded that a Species Evaluation Request would need to be submitted to FWC for review.

Commissioner Bergeron asked about the commenting process in permitting for landowners and developers related to listed species in advance of any work on the habitat for these species.

Dr. Gruver replied with affirmation of the coordination of commenting related to listed species.

Executive Director Wiley added that the Office of Conservation Planning Services works closely with the Species Conservation Planning Section to provide comments early on proposed development projects so that landowners and developers know about the species in the proposed area that could be affected by any change to the habitat.

Chairman Yablonski mentioned the list of stakeholders involved in this process over the past several years to get the ISMP to this point.

Commissioner Rivard asked how a plan of this nature will help in consideration of the request to list an additional 300 species on the Endangered Species List. He also commented on the importance of working proactively with landowners and developers to educate on the importance and need for these extra efforts related to mitigation and other options.

Dr. Gruver replied that the management plan presented will include consideration of the 19 species in Florida which are candidate species for the Endangered Species List. He added that the proactive outreach to landowners and developers is an underlying philosophy of the agency and that the permitting guidelines will be presented to the Commission for additional guidance and approval.

Executive Director Wiley commented that this plan provides a positive platform for the State of Florida as the federal agencies review the request to add additional species to the Endangered Species List.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Priddy, seconded by Commissioner Bergeron and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendation.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Populations and their Habitats – Mr. David Johnson, Assistant Section Leader within the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, provided an update to the Commission on Florida's Wildlife Management Area (WMA) System. He also introduced two local staff members who are integral parts of this program.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this item:

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission regarding bears not being mentioned in this presentation and the need to set some of the objectives for WMAs to replenish the food source for native wildlife. She noted the importance of offering photography as a high revenue collecting opportunity on these lands.

Ms. Danielle Whitehill addressed the Commission.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Hanas requested a list of all the land that FWC is either the lead or a cooperating agency on for the State of Florida. He also asked how much effort the other cooperating agencies provide on areas where FWC is not the lead agency.

Mr. Johnson responded that he will provide that list. He noted that the level of effort from the other cooperating agencies varies based on the property and their specific assigned roles.

Commissioner Bergeron noted the wonderful opportunity this program provides in allowing preservation of millions of acres for the public.

Chairman Yablonski asked about the efforts to get private landowners into this system.

Mr. Johnson replied that there are currently three private landowners who participate in the WMA System with a user pay program which charges the public for specific types of use of the property. In these user pay programs, the private landowner receives a majority of the money.

Executive Director Wiley responded that the private landowner programs through the WMA System are valuable for those entities working to expand their conservation efforts. However, it is difficult to compete with the private lease type program that is available to the landowner.

Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida

Chairman Yablonski invited Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida (FWFF) board member, Ms. “Boo” Rawson, to address the Commission.

Ms. Rawson commented on recent actions at the Foundation. She thanked Commissioner Bergeron for hosting the recent BlueGreen Event which raised over \$300,000 in funding to specifically benefit the Everglades Youth Conservation Center.

Items Requiring Action

Critical Wildlife Area (CWA) – Ms. Melissa Tucker, Assistant Section Leader within the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, presented a proposal for the establishment of a new CWA at a three-acre sandbar in the Cape Romano Shoals in Collier County.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this item:

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission.

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming addressed the Commission with strong support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Ronald Houser, member of Audubon Society, addressed the Commission with support of staff recommendation. He requested FWC continue to identify areas throughout the state that can be utilized for these habitat areas.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell addressed the Commission in support of staff proposal.

Ms. Jean Hall with Collier Shorebird Alliance addressed the Commission. She thanked FWC staff for their coordinated effort to help save shorebirds in Collier County. She noted support for staff proposal.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Priddy noted the many opportunities on other local areas for visitors to camp if this closure for nesting season is approved. She noted support for this proposal.

Commissioner Bergeron agreed with support for the proposal.

Chairman Yablonski noted this would be the second CWA approved in the last few years.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bergeron, seconded by Vice Chairman Priddy and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendation.

Pinellas County Manatee Protection Rule – Mr. Kipp Frohlich, Deputy Director with the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, presented a revision to the manatee protection zone in Indian Rocks Beach that was approved in June 2015.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this item:

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming addressed the Commission with a request to respect the Local Rule Review Committee (LRRC) process.

Ms. Katie Tripp with Save the Manatee Club addressed the Commission in regards to the impact of any action not involved with the LRRC process. She noted support by local citizens and offered a list of signatures of members of the community who wish to keep these areas protected.

Mr. Steven Webster with Citizens for Florida's Waterways addressed the Commission. He asked if there was a need for manatee zones in Pinellas County in the first place. He noted the importance of dealing with the seagrass issues and the healthy, growing manatee population in Florida.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Priddy asked why the basins were added to the proposal. She asked if the local governments could create local zones in these basin areas in the future if desired.

Mr. Frohlich replied that in the initial LRRC process the basins were recommended for removal. However, this process requires coordination with several stakeholders including local governments and there have been a few changes in the request to include the basins during this process. He responded that the local government could create a local speed zone in the future for these basins without additional coordination requirements from FWC.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Spottswood, seconded by Commission Hanas and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendation.

Major Hunting rule changes for 2016-2017 season – Mr. Paul Scharine, Biological Scientist IV with the Division of Hunting and Game Management, presented draft rule amendments to review select statewide hunting regulations, and specific area regulations on WMAs, Wildlife and Environmental Areas and Miscellaneous Areas, and to conform hunting dates to calendar year date changes.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this item:

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission.

Ms. Anita Page addressed the Commission.

Mr. Bill Sagues addressed the Commission.

Mr. Brad Willnecker, President of Southeastern Dog Hunters Association, addressed the Commission in support of small game hunts on WMAs. He thanked FWC staff and Commissioners for providing these opportunities.

Mr. Todd Hallman addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation with concern about the timeline of receiving a permit for camping online.

Mr. John Rosier with Everglades Coordinating Council addressed the Commission with questions about time limits on camping permits. He then suggested mirroring the Avon Park model for tiered hunting opportunities so that the cost of the activity is still an average amount which is affordable to most public hunters.

Ms. Karen Johnson addressed the Commission with a request to have a hunter ethics course in conjunction with the hunter safety course in Florida. She noted the State of Maine currently uses an ethics course.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Priddy asked about the Babcock Ranch Preserve related to Tier II hunting opportunities. She asked Executive Director Wiley to clarify the ability to hunt bear in this area.

Executive Director Wiley responded that this area was not open for the recent bear season because the specific Bear Management Unit (BMU) was not open, but that if the BMU is approved in the future for hunting, then it would be allowed in this area.

Commissioner Rivard noted the mission statement of the agency.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Rivard, seconded by Vice Chairman Priddy and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendation.

General Counsel Report

Mr. Bud Vielhauer, General Counsel, presented information to the Commission on public records and government in the sunshine. He also provided an update on legal matters related to the agency.

Future Agenda Items

Assistant Executive Director Sutton reviewed potential agenda items for the February 2016 Commission meeting scheduled to take place in Tallahassee, Florida.

Chairman Yablonski commented that Commissioner Spottswood requested an update and informational presentation on Florida Bay during the April 2016 Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Roberts asked for presentations on Redfish and Sheepshead and additional information on the options for out of state guide permit fees.

Vice Chairman Priddy noted the venomous reptile permits and other captive wildlife issues being brought to the Commission and requested an update at a future Commission Meeting.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

The following individuals registered to speak on items not listed on the agenda:

Ms. Anita Page addressed the Commission with emphasis on allowing a review of the bear hunt and changes that need to be made on this topic. She asked about the penalties and fines related to the recent bear hunt and whether or not they are a deterrent for illegal activity.

Ms. Shirlene Stuckey addressed the Commission regarding the bear hunt.

Ms. Karen Johnson addressed the Commission in opposition to unethical hunting. She proposed a selection process for tags to limit the amount of opportunity equal to harvest objectives.

Mr. John Rosier addressed the Commission thanking staff and FWC's Regional Directors for being so responsive to the public.

Mr. Ronnie Groom, Owner of C&G Sporting Goods, addressed the Commission with thanks for approving the bear hunt.

Mr. Herman Bullock addressed the Commission with thanks for the successful Bear Management Program.

Ms. Kate MacFall with the Humane Society of the United States addressed the Commission. She noted concern over the data received after the hunt was completed and closed.

Ms. Halley Marsh addressed the Commission with thanks for the recent bear hunt.

Mr. Allan Tucker, Director of the Florida State Dog Hunters Association, addressed the Commission. He noted the reason that the recent harvest of bears in the Eastern Panhandle was higher than projected due to the higher population of bears in the area.

Mr. Benny Waterfield addressed the Commission with comments of the ethical outlook in his experience with the recent bear hunt. He thanked the Commissioners for their decisions on the conservation of this species.

Mr. Bill Sagues addressed the Commission with a suggestion to handle future bear hunts the same way as the Florida alligator hunts.

Mr. Cody Berens addressed the Commission regarding his local processing business and his experience with the hunt. He noted the request to update the season dates to allow for an opportunity for hunting during colder temperatures.

Commissioner Exchange

Commissioner Spottswood commented on how pleased and proud he is to have participated in his second meeting as part of this Commission.

Commissioner Roberts thanked staff for providing the information on each of the agenda items and their support in carrying out the obligation to the agency. He thanked Commissioner Rivard for the hospitality.

Commissioner Rivard thanked all those that attended the meeting here in Panama City and Steve Shea for organizing the logistics of the meeting.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Commissioner Rivard for hosting this meeting. He commented on how honored he feels to sit with all the other Commissioners. He thanked Officer Brady for his dedication to FWC and finally, he thanked the stakeholders for their participation in the meeting.

Commissioner Hanas echoed the thanks to Commissioner Rivard for hosting. He applauded what FWC staff are tasked with conserving in this day and age.

Vice Chairman Priddy thanked staff for always providing the information to make these important decisions. She noted that the recent bear hunt provided information that can be analyzed and discussed when moving forward. She echoed the sentiments of Commissioner Rivard in quoting the mission of the agency to balance things.

Chairman Yablonski spoke of the high regard for Officer Brady and recognizing his amazing story. He agreed with the previous comments of analyzing the bear hunt and data to move forward with changes as necessary. He commented that the ISMP has been years in the making and thanked the team involved with that topic. He thanked Sabrina Menendez, Linda Henderson, Emily Hershman, and Lisa Zullo for their assistance in handling the increased correspondence with the bear hunt topic. Finally, he thanked Executive Director Wiley and Assistant Executive Director Sutton for all of their support.

Commission Administrative Matters

The next regularly scheduled Commission meeting is set for February 10 – 11, 2016 in Tallahassee, Florida, commencing at 8:30 a.m. each day.

Adjournment

Chairman Yablonski adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Brian Yablonski
Chairman

Nick Wiley
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

Lisa Zullo
Commission Assistant