

# Marine Fisheries Workplan Update



Staff Report  
September 27, 2018



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

This presentation provides an update on various Marine Fisheries Management Workplan items that are currently in progress.

Division: Marine Fisheries Management  
Authors: Stephanie Walthall and Jessica McCawley  
Contact Phone Number: 850-487-0554  
Report date: August 23, 2018

Unless otherwise noted, images throughout the presentation are by FWC.

# Background

- Today: Progress update on current approved Marine Fisheries workplan topics
- Dec. 2018: New workplan for Commission consideration

## What is the Marine Fisheries workplan?

- Marine fisheries management priorities for coming year
- DMFM and FWRI meet annually to coordinate management and research
- Review fishery issues and concerns
  - Identify available research relevant to various topics
  - Prioritize staff efforts and develop timelines
  - Determine management steps
- Complex issues require longer timelines

*Well-coordinated workplan maximizes productivity and efficiency*



Today's presentation provides the Commission with an update on the progress of select, current high-interest Marine Fisheries workplan topics. The current workplan was approved by the Commission on April 20, 2017. The new workplan will be presented for Commission consideration in December 2018 and will cover both the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 workplan years.

The workplan documents marine fisheries management priorities for the coming year. Each year DMFM staff meet with FWRI leadership to align management and research priorities and coordinate staff efforts. Workplan development takes into account a number of fishery issues and concerns from both staff and stakeholders. Available research, prioritizing and developing timelines, as well as determining management steps are additional components of workplan development, and ensure timely completion of workplan action items. Items have varying levels of complexity which affects the speed at which staff addresses them. Some items are completed quickly and others are known to be long-term projects. A well-coordinated workplan maximizes productivity and efficiency.

# 2017-2018 Workplan

## HIGH

Deepwater Coral HAPCs  
 Gulf Gray Triggerfish  
 Vermilion Snapper

Agency Strategic Planning  
 Bay Scallops  
 Cobia  
 Fisheries Management Outreach  
 Lionfish  
 Oysters  
 Reef Ecosystem Management  
 Rule Cleanup  
 Sharks  
 Shrimp  
 Snook  
 Spotted Seatrout  
 Trap Fisheries Management  
 Federal Legislation  
 Goliath Grouper  
 IFQ 5-Year Review  
 Gulf and Atlantic Red Snapper  
 Sector Reallocation  
 Lobster  
 Gulf Gag Grouper

## MEDIUM

Multi-day Fishing Limits in Tortugas  
 SAL Updates  
 Western Dry Rocks  
 Permit

Sheepshead  
 Tripletail  
 Citizen Science Opportunities  
 Regulatory Discards  
 Predator Species and Nuisance Behavior  
 Habitat and Water Quality  
 Gulf Black Sea Bass  
 Mullet  
 Wholesale/Retail Sales Requirements  
 Florida Threatened Species  
 Flounder  
 Import Size Limits  
 Mangrove Snapper  
 Grouper Closures  
 Electronic Reporting  
 Red Drum

## LOW

Cownose Rays  
 Blackfin Tuna  
 Orange Cup Coral  
 Slipper Lobster  
 Horseshoe Crab  
 Spot and Atlantic Croaker  
 Marine Life Trends Analysis  
 Red Drum Tournament Permit  
 Marine Life Management (aquarium trade)  
 Menhaden  
 Blueline Tilefish

Blue = Federal issue  
 [Pink box] = New  
 [Dashed box] = Carry-over  
 [Pink highlight] = Updates covered today



Here is the approved 2017-2018 workplan. Work items are sorted into high, medium, and low priority categories. Within each category, the items are distinguished as *new* or *carry-over* issues. Note that items indicated by pink highlight will be covered further in today's presentation.

# Unexpected Fly-in Items

## Issues often arise mid-workplan

- Flexibility to address emerging issues important
  - Reprioritizing efforts required

## Trade-offs with shifting priorities

- Research and monitoring efforts may need to be redirected
- Progress on long-term issues often stops
  - Impacts stakeholder engagement and investment
  - Previous gains can be lost



As the year progresses, interests in new or developing items can shift the focus away from previous priorities already approved on the workplan. This occurs when new, critical issues develop rapidly. Maintaining flexibility to address these fly-in items is important, however, reprioritizing efforts is a required ramification.

There are a number of trade-offs with shifting focus away from previously identified priorities. Research and monitoring efforts may need to be redirected, stock assessment schedules for unrelated species may be impacted, and progress on long-term issues often stops. Unfortunately, when long-term projects lose momentum, stakeholder relationships are impacted as well and any previous gains can be lost. These trade-offs need to be considered when deciding whether to redirect resources to a particular fly-in item mid-workplan.

## Topics Covered Today

- Bay scallops
- Sharks
- Spotted seatrout
- Blue Heron Bridge
- Oysters
- Goliath grouper
- Shrimp
- Trap fisheries
- Gulf Council
  - Red snapper
  - **Cobia**
  - Mangrove snapper
  - Gray triggerfish
- South Atlantic Council
  - **For-hire limited entry workshops**
  - **Yellowtail snapper**
  - **Best fishing practices**
  - Red snapper
  - **Deep-water shrimp and golden crab**
  - Sector allocation policy
- **Hurricane Irma funds**
- Magnuson Act reauthorization
- Lionfish
- Biscayne National Park



**Highlighted** items were not on the workplan

Various topics will be covered in today's update. Items are listed in the order they appear in the presentation. Note that the highlighted items were fly-ins not included on the approved workplan.

## Bay Scallops

- Stakeholders and coastal communities asked for management changes
- **Feb. 2018:** Commission approved regionally-specific changes to 2018 and 2019 season dates
- **Feb. 2019:** Draft rule for the season structure in 2020 and beyond



## Sharks

- **April 2018:** Review and discussion
  - Commission directed staff to gather public input on shore-based shark fishing
- **July/Aug. 2018:** 10 workshops
  - No-cost permit received considerable support
  - Mixed feedback on other management options
- **Dec. 2018:** Draft rule



Shark photo courtesy of NOAA

In recent years, stakeholders and coastal communities have expressed an interest in changes to management of the bay scallop fishery, particularly the timing of the open season. Based on feedback from community leaders and stakeholders, the Commission made temporary, regionally specific, changes to the 2017 season dates. At the February 2018 Commission meeting, the Commission approved continuing regionally-specific season for the 2018 and 2019 scallop seasons. Staff will return to the Commission in February 2019 with a draft rule to establish a more permanent season structure for 2020 and beyond.

Sharks are a high profile, high interest topic with passionate stakeholders advocating for diverse management actions and philosophies. In April 2018, staff presented a review and discussion of various shark-related issues, including shore-based shark fishing. At that time, the Commission directed staff to explore regulatory options for the shore-based fishery. Staff has now held 10 public workshops around the state with affected stakeholders. The no-cost permit has been the most widely supported regulatory option. Staff has received mixed feedback on other management options. Staff will return in December 2018 with a draft rule to improve conservation practices of this fishery and reduce user group conflicts.

## Spotted Seatrout

- Stakeholder concerns
- Updated stock assessment
- 2017:
  - Workshops
  - Commission update delayed due to Hurricane Irma
- 2018: Upcoming statewide management survey
- Feb. 2019: Potential draft rule



## Blue Heron Bridge

- Popular, internationally recognized inshore dive/snorkeling site
  - Small area
  - Stakeholders want area closed to Marine Life harvest
- June-Aug. 2018: Staff met with stakeholders and Palm Beach County
- Dec. 2018 or Feb. 2019: Potential draft rule



Photo courtesy of Cole Kendall Photo courtesy of Ryan Nelson

Spotted seatrout is among Florida's most popular recreational fisheries and is targeted for both food and sport. Staff have heard concerns from stakeholders around the state about the status of this fishery in recent years. Staff conducted a series of public workshops and produced a virtual workshop to gather stakeholder feedback across the state in 2017. A review and discussion of the fishery and feedback received was scheduled for Commission consideration in September 2017, but was postponed due to Hurricane Irma. A statewide management survey will be conducted in 2018 and a potential draft rule could come before the Commission in February 2019.

The Blue Heron Bridge is a popular, internationally recognized inshore dive/snorkeling site in Palm Beach County that is accessible without a vessel through Phil Foster County Park. The site is unique among shore dives sites because it is both accessible to novice divers and home to unusual numbers of tropical marine life. Due to its small size, unique accessibility and diversity of marine life, and high public use, stakeholders are asking that the area be closed to all Marine Life harvest. Staff met with stakeholders in June and August 2018 and received support for a closure from Palm Beach County. A possible draft rule on this topic could come before the Commission as early as December 2018 or February 2019.

## Oysters

- Industry concerns
  - Apalachicola and Cedar Key
- Staff working with industry, local communities, and partners on:
  - Management desires
  - Adaptive management plans
  - Other oyster-related projects
- Future Commission discussion



## Goliath Grouper

- [Feb. 2017](#): Review and discussion
  - Commission directed staff to gather public input on potential limited harvest
- [Summer/fall 2017](#): Workshops
- [April 2018](#): Topic overview and public feedback
  - Commission directed staff to develop a roadmap for future conservation efforts
- [Dec. 2018](#): Anticipated review and discussion on next steps for research and management



In recent years, the oyster industry has expressed concern about a collapsing oyster fishery in Apalachicola Bay from low freshwater flow conditions and the collateral effects of this collapse in other parts of the state, including Cedar Key. Staff are working alongside the oyster industry, local communities, and agency partners to collect feedback on management desires, adaptive management plans, and other oyster-related projects. Staff intend to continue working with these groups and anticipate bringing the topic to the Commission for discussion at a later date.

In February 2017, staff presented a review and discussion of the 2016 goliath grouper stock assessment and current research on goliath. The Commission directed staff to gather public input on a potential limited harvest opportunity. In summer and fall 2017, staff conducted 17 workshops around the state. This feedback was presented in April 2018 and staff were directed to develop a proposed roadmap for future conservation efforts. Staff will bring back suggested next steps for research and management at the December 2018 meeting.

## Shrimp

- Long-term project to update and streamline statewide and regional regulations
  - Evaluate season structure
  - Assess allowable harvest days
  - Consider spatial closures
  - Address conflicts with other fisheries
- **Today:** FPH live food shrimp
- **Upcoming:** Review northeast regional shrimp regulations
  - Allowable harvest days
  - Permit transferability



## Trap Fisheries

- Long-term project to evaluate and improve management of Florida's trap fisheries
  - Multi-fishery sustainability
  - Achieve trap reduction goals
  - Address user conflicts and industry requests
- **Today:** FPH first phase
- **Upcoming:** Second phase
  - Clarify trap working regulations
  - Partial payment of stone crab trap allotment
  - Stone crab management needs

Staff are working to modernize and streamline shrimp regulations. As part of this long-term project, staff are considering a variety of statewide and regional updates to the regulations, including seasons, allowable harvest days, spatial closures, and addressing conflicts with other fisheries. Today, staff propose final rule amendments to exclude live food shrimp from seafood icing requirements and establish regulations specific to live food shrimp harvest. The next step in this project is related to reviewing the northeast regional shrimp regulations. Staff will be examining allowable harvest days and evaluating the transferability of permits.

As part of a long-term project to evaluate and improve the management of Florida's saltwater trap fisheries, staff is working with stakeholders to identify areas where regulations could be clarified or modified to address specific management needs related to commercial and recreational trap fisheries. Today, staff propose final rules to better understand participation and effort in the recreational stone crab and blue crab trap fisheries, to modify the commercial spiny lobster trap soak and trap removal periods, and to require that commercial stone crab fishers maintain current commercial licenses to retain their stone crab trap allotments. Staff anticipate returning to the Commission with recommendations for trap working requirements, partial payment of stone crab allotment, and additional stone crab trap management needs as the second phase of this long-term project. This phase of the project will also include updating the degradable panel requirements for lobster traps.

## Gulf Council

- Red snapper
  - Florida EFP 2019 recreational season
  - State management
  - Sector allocations
  - Commercial IFQ
- Cobia 
- Mangrove snapper
- Gray triggerfish



## South Atlantic Council

- For-hire limited entry workshops 
- Yellowtail snapper 
- Best fishing practices 
- Red snapper
- Deep-water shrimp and golden crab 
- Sector allocation policy

Ongoing and anticipated Gulf Council discussions include Red snapper (2019 Florida EFP, state management, sector allocations, and commercial IFQ), cobia, mangrove snapper, and gray triggerfish.

Ongoing and anticipated SAFMC discussions include for-hire limited entry workshops, yellowtail snapper, best fishing practices, red snapper, deep-water shrimp and golden crab, and sector allocation policy.

## Hurricane Irma Funds



- Florida receiving \$44.6 million from NOAA for fisheries disaster
- Spend plan should be approved soon
- FWC has 2 years to spend the funds



## Magnuson Act Reauthorization

- Many bills are moving in the House and Senate, but not likely to be reauthorized this year
- Multiple marine fisheries issues could be addressed
- Staff following bills closely
- [Feb. 2019](#): Update

Hurricane Irma struck the Florida Keys on Sept. 10, 2017, and continued a northward track, leaving a trail of destruction across Florida. In June 2018, thanks to a request from Governor Scott, NOAA Fisheries allocated \$44,608,039 to respond to the 2017 Hurricane Irma Disaster for Florida and to provide relief for businesses that rely on Florida's commercial and recreational fishing industry. Governor Scott has asked the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to take the lead on developing a plan for utilizing these funds, in coordination with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), the Executive Office of the Governor (EOG), and other key agencies. FWC is currently developing a plan to spend these funds, incorporating feedback from various stakeholder groups. These funds can be used to restore the fishery, prevent a similar failure in the future, and assist fishing communities affected by Hurricane Irma. FWC has two years to spend these funds.

The Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act) is eligible for reauthorization. There are numerous bills moving through the House and Senate that would reauthorize and updates parts of the Magnuson Act. In addition, there are a number of bills that address marine issues that staff is following. We are hearing that the likelihood that these bills pass and the Magnuson reauthorization happens this year is low. Staff will give our annual update on federal Congressional items at the February 2019 Commission meeting.

## Lionfish

- 2018 Lionfish Challenge
  - New tagged-lionfish component
- Lionfish charter harvest program
- Research
  - Contracts issued for trap/ROV research and development
  - Working with FWRI, UF, and BNP
- Lionfish Summit 2018
  - Platform for updates in research, outreach and education, and commercial market



## Biscayne National Park

- Fishery Management Plan finalized
- FWC and NPS Science Plan will inform fishing regulations
- FWC to develop fisheries rules
- **Feb 2019:** Staff will return with
  - Science Plan
  - Proposed fisheries rule package
  - Stakeholder input plan

The 2018 Lionfish Challenge now has a tagged-lionfish component where participants that submit tagged lionfish are eligible to receive up to \$5,000. The lionfish charter harvest program aims to incentivize dive charters to conduct lionfish-specific harvesting trips in an effort to increase the number of lionfish removed from Florida waters. Research contracts have also been issued awarding a total of \$250,000 in trap research and development. FWC is working internally with FWRI and partnering with the University of Florida to develop modifications to existing traps to increase the efficiency of deep-water lionfish harvest. FWC has also partnered with Biscayne National Park to conduct lionfish removals and research inside the park. The 2018 Lionfish Summit is planned for later this year and will serve as a platform for various updates in lionfish research, outreach and education, and the commercial market since the last Lionfish Summit in 2013. Staff hope to receive valuable insight and feedback on the progress made since the last Summit and identify our future directions for lionfish control.

FWC worked with Biscayne National Park for 15 years to develop and finalize a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the park. This plan directs how fisheries in the park will be managed and specifies that FWC will promulgate the fisheries regulations for the Park. The first step in this process is the creation of a Science Plan that will guide National Park Service and FWC monitoring of the resources to determine if they are meeting the management goals in the FMP. In February 2019, staff proposes to bring the Science plan for Commission approval along with a draft of potential fishery regulations for the Park. Staff will also discuss a stakeholder input plan at this meeting and the timeline for returning with a draft rule.

## Next Workplan

- Staff making good progress on current workplan items
- **Dec. 2018:** Full workplan presentation
  - Commission will review and approve short-term and long-term marine research and management topics
- Following workplan approval
  - Fly-in items will have to be considered and prioritized as they arise
  - Expectations will need to be adjusted to account for fly-ins when they occur



The full workplan will be presented for Commission approval in December 2018. This workplan will encompass two years, and is for the period from July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2020. Topics not on the workplan may appear on Commission meeting agendas in response to circumstances that arise unexpectedly, or to address significant concerns regarding a particular fishery or marine resource. These fly-ins will be considered and prioritized as they arise and expectations will need to be adjusted when they occur.

The following slides are considered backup material  
and are not anticipated to be part of the actual  
presentation



# Checklist of 2017-2018 Workplan Items

## HIGH

- ✓ Cobia
  - ✓ Deepwater Coral HAPCs
  - ✓ Gulf Gag Grouper
  - ✓ Gulf Gray Triggerfish
  - ✓ Vermilion Snapper
- Lobster
- Bay Scallops
  - Goliath Grouper
  - IFQ 5-Year Review
  - Sharks
  - Shrimp
  - Snook
  - Spotted Seatrout
  - Trap Fisheries Management
- ∞ Agency Strategic Planning
  - ∞ Federal Legislation
  - ∞ Fisheries Management Outreach
  - ∞ Gulf and Atlantic Red Snapper
  - ∞ Lionfish
  - ∞ Oysters
  - ∞ Reef Ecosystem Management
  - ∞ Rule Cleanup
  - ∞ Sector Reallocation

## MEDIUM

- ✓ Import Size Limits
  - ✓ Permit
  - ✓ Sheepshead
  - ✓ Tripletail
- Electronic Reporting
  - Flounder
  - Gulf Black Sea Bass
  - Mangrove Snapper
  - Mullet
  - Predator Species and Nuisance Behavior
  - Regulatory Discards
  - SAL Updates
- ∞ Citizen Science Opportunities
  - ∞ Florida Threatened Species
  - ∞ Habitat and Water Quality
- ❖ Multi-day Fishing Limits in Tortugas
  - ❖ Red Drum
  - ❖ Western Dry Rocks

## LOW

- Cownose Rays
- Blackfin Tuna
- Blueline Tilefish
- Orange Cup Coral
- Slipper Lobster
- Horseshoe Crab
- Spot and Atlantic Croaker
- Marine Life Trends Analysis
- Red Drum Tournament Permit
- Marine Life Management (aquarium trade)
- Menhaden

- ✓ Completed
- Expected to be completed this year
- Carry-over
- ∞ Ongoing
- ❖ On hold



This is a checklist of the items on the 2017-2018 workplan.