

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management  
**Date:** December 12, 2018  
**Subject:** Consent Agenda: Tarpon Tag Rule Cleanup – Draft Rule

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**Purpose:**

Obtain approval of a proposed draft rule modifying the statewide tarpon tag regulations in 68B-32, Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

**Summary:**

Tarpon are one of Florida’s premier sport fisheries and are highly valued as a catch-and-release species. In 2013, FWC made the tarpon fishery catch-and-release only, with a limited allowance for anglers to harvest or possess one tarpon per person per year only when in pursuit of an International Game Fish Association (IGFA) state or IGFA world record and with the use of an FWC-issued tarpon tag. FWC also implemented a requirement that all tarpon greater than 40 inches fork length must remain in the water. This was done to minimize injury to large fish and decrease mortality of released fish.

As of July 1, 2018, administration of the Florida state saltwater record program was transferred from IGFA to FWC. The current tarpon tag rule that allows for the harvest or possession of a single tarpon for the purpose of pursuing an IGFA state record needs to be updated to reflect this change. Additionally, there is a need to clarify the handling requirements for large tarpon due to recent confusion about the use of tarpon tags solely for the purpose of removing tarpon greater than 40 inches from the water.

The proposed rule amendments will reflect the administrative change in the state records program by removing the reference to IGFA as it relates to the state record program allowing anglers to continue to harvest or possession a single tarpon with a tag only when pursuing an FWC-administered state or IGFA world record. They also will clarify that any tarpon measuring greater than 40 inches fork length cannot be removed from the water unless harvested with a tag in pursuit of a qualifying state or world record.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approval of proposed draft rules in 68B-32, FAC, that will:

- Remove “International Game Fish Association” as it relates to Florida state saltwater fishing records
- Clarify that tarpon over 40 inches cannot be removed from the water unless harvested in pursuit of a record using a tarpon tag

If approved, the proposed changes will be advertised and filed for adoption without further hearing, unless requested by a member of the public.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Melissa Recks, Division of Marine Fisheries Management