

2019-2020 Marine Fisheries Workplan



Review and Discussion
December 12, 2018



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

This is a review and discussion of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management's (DMFM) proposed 2019-2020 workplan. This workplan is for the period from Jan. 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. Work items were sorted into high, medium, and low priorities. By placing an issue on the workplan, staff proposes to address it in the coming fiscal year. However, the time frame for resolution of some issues may be longer than a single year. Workplan development takes into account Commissioner input, stock assessment schedules, recommendations of DMFM and FWRI staff, public concerns, federal issues, and issues carried over from the previous year's workplan. The majority of these issues will be collaborative efforts between DMFM and FWRI. However, as with every workplan, there are some items that will be handled solely by DMFM.

Division: Marine Fisheries Management

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

Background

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

Well-coordinated workplan maximizes productivity and efficiency



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 FWC staff and stakeholders. Identifying available research, prioritizing and establishing timelines, as well as determining management steps are additional components of workplan development, and ensure timely completion of workplan action items. Some items are completed quickly and others are known to be long-term projects. A well-coordinated workplan maximizes productivity and efficiency.

Prioritization and Considerations

Prioritization

- Variety of high interest marine issues at state and federal levels
 - Need to prioritize Agency efforts
 - Some items on workplan already known to be long-term, multi-year projects

Considerations

- Resource concerns – regional, statewide, and federal levels
- Stock assessment schedule affects timing
- Speed at which the item moves forward varies
 - Complexity and urgency
 - Level of stakeholder coordination needed
- Triage – influx of short-term needs affects ability to address long-term issues



There are a number of challenges associated with prioritizing items included in the workplan each year. These challenges are often related to the high interest in marine fisheries issues at both the state and federal level. The number of marine issues is large and diverse and thus requires prioritization among Agency efforts each year. Some items chosen for the workplan are already known to be multi-year projects. There are also more items on the workplan than can be completed in a year and items may evolve as more information becomes available.

There are a number of considerations that go into prioritizing items on the workplan. Foremost are concerns about the sustainability and conservation of a resource. These resource concerns could be at a regional, statewide, or federal level. The timing and frequency of state and federal stock assessments also affects the prioritization of items and the timing of staff bringing them forward for Commission consideration.

The speed at which an item moves forward often varies based on the complexity of the item, urgency of the situation, and level of stakeholder coordination necessary for the item. Items on the workplan have varying levels of complexity, ranging from relatively simple (e.g., federal consistency action for broadly supported management updates) to complex (e.g., modifications to all trap fisheries), with some items becoming unexpectedly complex as they progress. Items may develop more slowly if multiple rounds of meetings with stakeholder groups are required to gain common understanding before making a recommendation. These and other factors affect the amount of staff time needed to prepare the item for Commission consideration.

Throughout the year, staff conducts triage on workplan items by trying to address short-term needs while maintaining work and progress on longer-term projects. Also, as the year progresses, interest in new or developing items (fly-ins) can shift the focus away from previous priorities already included in the workplan.

Anticipating Fly-ins

- Issues often arise mid-workplan
 - Emerging issues can create a sense of urgency
 - Must determine whether to take immediate action
- Fly-ins vary in nature
 - Critical or environmentally-induced problems
 - Perceived localized or broader changes in a fishery
 - Increased interest around previously-identified issues

Reprioritization of 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



Marine fisheries issues regularly arise mid-workplan year, and there will often be a sense of urgency surrounding those issues. Whether it's an Agency or stakeholder sense of urgency, staff must work together with the Commission to determine how to address these fly-ins and decide whether to begin work on them mid-workplan year. Fly-in items vary in nature and require staff to reprioritize efforts in order to address emerging issues that warrant immediate action. Issues that might develop include environmentally induced problems with impacts on Florida's fisheries, perceived changes in a fishery (either localized or on a broader scale), and previously identified lower priority issues that rapidly become higher profile.

When considering fly-ins, 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 and previous gains may be lost. These trade-offs need to be considered when deciding whether to redirect resources to a particular fly-in item mid-workplan.

Checklist of 2017-2018 Workplan Items

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cobia ✓ Deepwater Coral HVPCs ✓ Gulf Gag Grouper ✓ Gulf Gray Triggerfish ✓ Lobster ✓ Vermilion Snapper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hogfish ✓ Permit ✓ Sheepshead ✓ Tripletail 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Bay Scallops > Goliath Grouper > IFQ 5-Year Review > Sharks > Shrimp > Snook > Spotted Seatrout > Trap Fisheries Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Electronic Reporting > Flounder > Gulf Black Sea Bass > Mangrove Snapper > Mullet > Predator Species and Nuisance Behavior > Regulatory Discards > SAL Updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Blackfin Tuna > Blueline Tilefish > Cownose Rays > Horseshoe Crab > Marine Life Management (aquarium trade) > Marine Life Trends Analysis > Menhaden > Orange Cup Coral > Red Drum Tournament Permit > Slipper Lobster > Spot and Atlantic Croaker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Agency Strategic Planning ∞ Federal Legislation ∞ Fisheries Management Outreach ∞ Gulf and Atlantic Red Snapper ∞ Lionfish ∞ Oysters ∞ Reef Ecosystem Management ∞ Rule Cleanup ∞ Sector Reallocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Citizen Science Opportunities ∞ Florida Threatened Species ∞ Habitat and Water Quality 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Multi-day Fishing Limits in Tortugas ◆ Red Drum ◆ Western Dry Rocks 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completed > Carry-over ∞ Ongoing ◆ On hold Blue = Federal item </div>

This is a checklist of the items on the 2017-2018 workplan that was extended through Dec. 31, 2018. They are partitioned into *high*, *medium*, and *low* priority categories. Within each category, the items are further divided into *completed*, *carry-over*, *ongoing* and *on hold* categories. Items in blue text are federal items and items in black are state items. *Carry-over* items are those staff expected to complete in 2017-2018 but were unable to finish. In other cases, some parts of *carry-over* items have or will be completed, but additional issues related to these items surfaced and will be incorporated into next year's workplan. *Ongoing* items are multi-year projects, or items expected to continue into the 2019-2020 workplan. Of the 52 items listed, 10 are *completed*, and 27 will roll over into the 2019-2020 workplan. There are 12 items considered to be *ongoing* and three items were *on hold* for the 2017-2018 workplan year.

Proposed 2019-2020 Workplan Items

HIGH

Blue Heron Bridge
 Irma & Michael Recovery
 Permit
 Aquaculture
 Yellowtail Snapper

Agency Strategic Planning
 Bay Scallops
 Biscayne National Park
 Corals
 Habitat and Water Quality
 Lionfish
 Oysters
 Rule Cleanup
 Sharks
 Shrimp
 Snook and Red Drum
 Spotted Seatrout
 Trap Fisheries Management
 Federal Legislation
 Goliath Grouper
 Gulf Reef Fish Survey Expansion
 IFQ 5-Year Review
 Red Snapper
 Sector Revitalization

MEDIUM

Limits on Otherwise Unregulated Species
 RS Qualification
 Spawning Issues
 Dolphin

Blackfin Tuna
 Citizen Science
 Fisheries Management Outreach
 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Planning
 Flounder
 Import Size Limits
 Lobster Trap Exclusion Zones in Pennekamp
 Mullet
 Predator Species and Nuisance Behavior
 SAL Updates
 Spot and Atlantic Croaker
 Atlantic Deepwater Species
 Cobia
 Electronic Reporting
 Mangrove Snapper

LOW

Cownose Rays
 Horseshoe Crab
 Marine Life Management (aquarium trade)
 Orange Cup Coral
 Slipper Lobster
 Bluefin Tilefish

Blue = Federal item
 = New
 = Carry-over



This is a list of DMFM's proposed 2019-2020 workplan items. They are partitioned into high, medium, and low priority categories. Within each category, the items are distinguished as *new* or *carry-over* issues. Of the 50 items listed, 10 are listed as new items for the upcoming workplan. Items that are listed in *black* are state issues and those that are listed in *blue* are federal issues. Overall, there are 36 state issues and 14 federal issues.

Stock Assessments

State

2019

Flounder (status update)
Marine Life Trends Analysis

2020

Blue crab
Red drum
Snook

Federal

2019

Gulf
Gray triggerfish
Red grouper

Atlantic

Cobia
Greater amberjack
Red porgy

Gulf and Atlantic

Scamp
Yellowtail snapper

2020

Gulf
Cobia
Greater amberjack
Vermilion snapper

Atlantic

Golden tilefish
Snowy grouper

Gulf and Atlantic

King mackerel

HMS

Atlantic blacktip



This is a list of the state and federal stock assessments that are expected to be completed during the 2019 and 2020 calendar years. Rulemaking associated with these assessments could occur during the upcoming workplan year.

Maintaining Progress on DMFM Objectives

Maintain progress on long-term management projects

- Trap fisheries
- Shrimp fisheries
- Oysters
- Red snapper
- Federal legislation
- Biscayne National Park fisheries

Simplify regulations

- Rule cleanup
 - Local laws, Special Acts of Local Application, species rules, and gear regulations

Improve information exchange

- Fisheries management inreach/outreach
- Citizen science opportunities



There are several types of issues included in the proposed 2019-2020 workplan that are closely aligned with the goals of the Innovations in Marine Fisheries Management Strategic Initiative.

Maintaining momentum toward completing long-term management projects is vital to achieving objectives. Long-term management projects are especially complex management issues that require extensive work with stakeholders and/or partners over several years. Examples of these long-term management projects from the proposed 2019-2020 workplan include trap fisheries, shrimp, oysters, red snapper, federal legislation, and Biscayne National Park fisheries. These are generally multi-year projects that will continue into future workplan cycles.

Rule cleanup is another category of items staff has been working on and also falls within the goal of Streamlining Marine Fishery Regulations, and is considered to be ongoing, as staff are continually working to simplify regulations without sacrificing management objectives. These items are brought forward for rulemaking as they are completed.

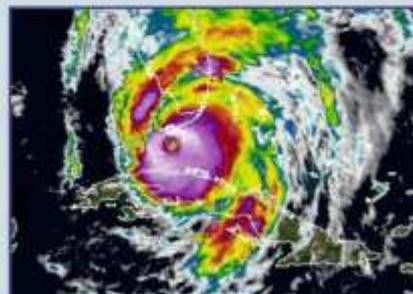
Two workplan items for this year that help the agency improve information exchange and align with the goal of Improved Communication are fisheries management inreach/outreach and citizen science opportunities. Both result in an increase in the public's understanding and appreciation of marine resources and the management of those resources.

Addressing Fly-in Items

- Allows nimbleness and effectiveness for short-term issues
- However, replaces or delays previous priorities
- Can reduce overall efficiency

Options for addressing mid-workplan issues

- Executive Orders: pressing or immediate needs
- Delay action until the following workplan
- Reprioritize staff efforts to address in the current workplan year



An approved workplan allows staff to commit time and fiscal resources toward priority issues, as well as plan cooperation with partners and stakeholders, in order to ensure timely completion of action items. As the year progresses, fly-in items can shift the focus away from previously approved workplan items. Maintaining flexibility to address these fly-in items is important, however, as previously discussed, reprioritizing efforts is a required ramification. Being able to shift priorities makes the Agency more nimble and more effective at addressing issues that need immediate attention. Yet, those fly-ins replace or delay other previous priorities. Routinely starting and stopping work on different issues, impacts overall efficiency.

There are a number of options available for addressing fly-in items that arise mid-workplan. Executive orders can be used to address pressing or immediate needs, action can be delayed until the next workplan cycle, or staff efforts can be shifted to address fly-ins during the current workplan.

Staff Recommendation

Approve the proposed 2019-2020 workplan

- Staff welcomes additional direction on any items

Fly-ins

- Consider and prioritize fly-in items as they arise
- Adjust expectations to account for fly-ins, as regular workplan items could be delayed

Staff requests your approval of the 2019-2020 workplan



Staff submits the 2019-2020 workplan for Commission direction and approval.

However, fly-ins will arise and topics not on the workplan may appear on Commission meeting agendas in response to unexpected circumstances, or to address significant concerns regarding a particular fishery or marine resource. These fly-ins will be considered and prioritized as they transpire and expectations for other items on the workplan will need to be adjusted when fly-ins take precedence.

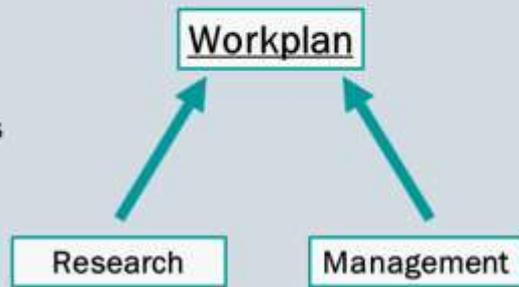
The following slides are considered backup material
and are not anticipated to be part of the actual
presentation



Incorporating Input into Future Management

Marine Fisheries Workplan

- Planning meeting held annually between DMFM and FWRI
- Considers
 - State and federal items
 - Research results that indicate management might be needed
 - Stock assessment schedules
 - Stakeholder concerns about issues
 - Commissioner feedback
- Items chosen for upcoming year as well as considered for next 5 to 10 years



The marine fisheries Workplan process began as an annual meeting between DMFM staff and FWRI leadership to plan management and research efforts for the coming fiscal year. Prior to 1998, marine fisheries were managed by the Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) and management and research staff were not housed in the same agency. The annual workplan meeting was part of the contract between the MFC and the research group, but the meeting has continued to aid in coordinating research efforts with management needs.

Staff include both state and federal management items in the workplan. Also considered for the workplan are results from FWRI research that indicate management measures might be necessary, such as the results of completed stock assessments. Staff monitor which state and federal stock assessments are scheduled to be completed in the coming year. Staff consider topics that stakeholders have expressed concern about for inclusion in the workplan, and Commissioner feedback is also taken into account. Some items that are included in the workplan are for the upcoming year, but staff also considers research and management items for the next 5 to 10 years.

List of Terms

Priorities

- High – items that are most important to develop and complete in a timely manner
- Medium – items that are important but do not take precedence over high priorities
- Low – items that are important enough to include in the workplan but may be done as time permits

Item classifications

- To Be Completed – items that are not yet completed but are expected to be completed during the current workplan year
- Ongoing – long-term, multi-year projects that will continue into the next workplan cycle
- Carry-over – items that are continued from the previous workplan
- New – New issues that will be added to the workplan
- On Hold – items that are no longer under active development



This slide contains a list of terms that are used to prioritize and classify workplan items.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – New

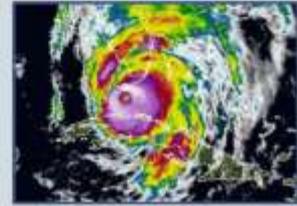
Blue Heron Bridge

- Popular, internationally-recognized inshore dive/snorkeling site
 - Request to close area to Marine Life collection



Hurricane Irma Recovery

- Florida receiving \$44.6 million from NOAA for fisheries disaster relief
- Spend plan should be approved soon
- FWC has 4 years to spend the funds



Blue Heron Bridge

The Blue Heron Bridge is a popular, internationally recognized inshore dive/snorkeling site in Palm Beach County that is accessible from shore at Phil Foster County Park. Due to its small size, unique accessibility, diversity of marine life, and high public use, stakeholders and local officials have requested that the area be closed to all Marine Life collection. Staff met with stakeholders in June and August 2018 and received support for a closure from Palm Beach County. A draft rule on this topic could come before the Commission in December 2018.

Hurricane Irma Recovery

Hurricane Irma struck the Florida Keys on Sept. 10, 2017, and continued a northward track, leaving a trail of destruction across Florida. Thanks to a request from Governor Scott, the Secretary of Commerce declared a fisheries disaster on Feb. 8, 2018. Congress then appropriated funds across multiple fishing disasters and NOAA Fisheries allocated \$44,608,039 to respond to the 2017 Hurricane Irma Disaster to Florida to provide relief for post-Irma recovery. Governor Scott asked FWC to take the lead on developing a plan for utilizing these funds in coordination with other key agencies. These funds can be used to assist fishing communities affected by Hurricane Irma. FWC developed a plan to spend these funds, incorporating feedback from various stakeholder groups, and is awaiting plan approval. FWC has four years to spend these funds.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – New

Hurricane Michael Recovery

- Major damage from Panama City to St. Marks
- Governor requested federal fishery disaster declaration
- Secretary of Commerce declared fisheries disaster on Oct. 31, 2018



Permit

- Supports a popular sport fishery
- Stakeholder concerns about population status
- Requests to further restrict harvest



Permit photo courtesy of Bryon Chamberlin

Hurricane Michael Recovery

Hurricane Michael made landfall at Mexico Beach on Wednesday, Oct. 10, 2018, as a strong Category 4 storm, and caused major damage to coastal and inland areas of Florida's panhandle from Panama City to St. Marks. On Oct. 24, 2018, Governor Scott submitted a request to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to declare a federal fishery resource disaster and for federal assistance to help impacted communities that rely on commercial and recreational fishing in Florida. This workplan item includes potential management actions to address impacts to recreational and commercial fisheries, and management of any federal fishery disaster relief funds, if allocated.

Permit

Permit are the basis of an iconic and lucrative sport fishery. Staff have heard concerns that fishing activities associated with targeting permit aggregations are having a negative impact on the local permit populations. Stakeholders have requested further restricting harvest by making the permit fishery catch-and-release only and/or by prohibiting commercial sale.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – New

Aquaculture

- Federal legislation recently introduced would establish a regulatory system in U.S. federal waters
- FWC should be prepared to engage



Yellowtail Snapper

- Atlantic commercial fishery continues to experience quota closures
- Atlantic recreational and Gulf fishery under-harvest their quota
- Commercial sector asking for management changes
- Stock assessment underway



Aquaculture photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Aquaculture

Federal legislation was recently introduced that would establish a regulatory system for aquaculture in U.S. federal waters. The U.S. Secretary of Commerce is interested in addressing the nation's seafood trade deficit by increasing domestic aquaculture production. Recently, in deciding a lawsuit over the Gulf Council's Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan (FMP), a judge ruled that NOAA Fisheries cannot regulate aquaculture under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. NOAA Fisheries is deliberating whether to appeal this decision. FWC should be prepared to engage on this topic.

Yellowtail Snapper

The Atlantic commercial yellowtail snapper fishery continues to experience quota closures, while the Atlantic recreational and the Gulf fishery under-harvest their quota. Commercial stakeholders want management changes to keep the Atlantic commercial fishery open, such as reallocation, removing sector allocations, combining the Gulf and Atlantic quotas, and commercial trip limits. The Commission has directed staff to work toward a solution to this problem, and FWC staff have worked with the Councils to initiate management changes. The commercial industry is divided on which management changes they would like, so continued stakeholder engagement is necessary to achieve the right solution. Future actions that may complicate or lessen this problem include a 2019 stock assessment and MRIP recalibration.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Agency Strategic Planning

- Staff continues to find innovative ways to address marine fisheries issues
- Commissioner Focal Area and team – Innovation in Marine Fisheries Management
- Staff participation in other cross-divisional strategic planning efforts and initiatives



Bay Scallops

- Stakeholders and coastal communities asked for management changes including the timing of the scallop season



Agency Strategic Plan

DMFM staff will continue to participate in the agency-wide effort to develop and implement the Agency Strategic Plan. The Innovation in Marine Fisheries Management strategic initiative team has finalized recommended actions for improving innovation. DMFM staff is heavily involved, along with staff from across the agency, in implementing these actions. Commissioner Focal Area – There is a Commissioner Focal Area (similarly worded to the strategic initiative) aimed at encouraging innovation in marine fisheries management. DMFM continues to find innovative ways to address the issues Florida faces, outside of those being considered by the strategic initiative team.

Bay Scallops

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 and 2018 season dates. FWRI is considering developing index-based reference points to give a longer-term target for sustainability and is also working to make improvements to how they survey the resource. This additional information could be used to better evaluate the status of the population and help guide future management. Staff plan to bring bay scallop management, particularly season dates for 2020 and beyond, forward for a draft rule in Feb. 2019.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Biscayne National Park

- Fishery Management Plan finalized
- FWC and National Park Service Science Plan will inform fishing regulations
- FWC to modify fishing regulations



Corals

- Unidentified, ongoing disease event
- Focal point for management



Biscayne National Park

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 a baseline for future comparison to determine if management changes are helping achieve the management goals in the FMP. FWC staff plan to bring the Science Plan and proposed regulatory changes for the Park in spring 2019.

Corals

Long-term monitoring programs have documented a reduction in stony (reef-building) corals and an increase in soft corals on Florida's coral reefs over the last 20 years. An unidentified disease event began affecting corals in 2014 in Miami-Dade County, initially spread north through Broward (2015), Palm Beach (2016) and Martin (2017) counties, and then moved south of Miami into the Upper (2016) and Middle Keys (2017). FWC and a multidisciplinary team of experts have been responding to this event, which is ongoing, to determine the likely cause and identify potential treatment and response actions. Given the highly stressed condition of Florida's coral reefs, coral reef restoration has become a focal point for management.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Habitat and Water Quality

- Impacts of habitat loss and water quality on fisheries has become an issue of considerable concern
- Red tide impacts to inshore fisheries



Lionfish

- Ongoing item of concern
- Staff is continuing to develop and implement removal programs



Habitat and Water Quality

Stakeholders have expressed considerable concern about the impacts of water quality and habitat loss on fisheries. Staff are still evaluating impacts of the recent red tide event on the fisheries in affected areas. Several stakeholders are asking that FWC take a more active role in these issues. In response, staff is working through the Strategic Initiative process to increase Agency involvement in management of marine fishery habitats.

Lionfish

Lionfish continue to pose a threat to Florida's reefs and ecosystems. Stakeholders have voiced a variety of ideas regarding further removal efforts, including authorizing the limited use of traps to target lionfish. Staff is continually working to find new, innovative ways to address lionfish population control. These efforts include annual statewide challenges, tiered incentive programs, tournaments, and excursions to target lionfish.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

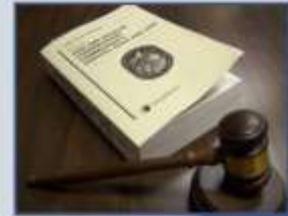
Oysters

- Industry concerns
- Staff working with industry, local communities, and partners
- Consider potential needs for regulatory changes



Rule Cleanup

- Systematic effort to update and clarify existing marine fisheries rules
- Collaborative project including staff from DMFM, Law Enforcement, and the Legal Office



Oysters

In recent years, the oyster industry has expressed concern about a collapsing oyster fishery in Apalachicola Bay due to low freshwater flow to the bay and the collateral effects of this localized collapse to oystering efforts 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.

Rule Cleanup

DMFM is conducting a systematic examination of marine fisheries rules in coordination with FWC Law Enforcement and the Legal Office in an effort to improve consistency and clarify existing regulations. Substantial progress has been made already during Phases I and II of the project, but this is an ongoing effort and will continue into the next workplan cycle.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Sharks

- User conflicts related to shore-based fishing
- Fin sales
- Reports of increased depredation on other species



Shrimp

- Long-term project to update and streamline statewide and regional regulations
 - Evaluate season structure
 - Assess allowable harvest days
 - Re-consider existing spatial closures
 - Address conflicts with other fisheries



Sharks

DMFM is working to address complaints about user conflicts related to shore-based shark fishing. Multiple Legislative and Congressional bills have also been introduced that would either prohibit sale of shark fins or prohibit importation of fins. DMFM is working with our Legislative and Congressional partners on this issue and rule changes may be needed if legislation passes. Staff will also evaluate possible measures to address concerns about increased depredation of other species by sharks.

Shrimp

The shrimp industry has undergone significant changes since current regulations were implemented. 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 re-evaluating current seasons, allowable harvest days, and spatial closures, as well as addressing conflicts with other fisheries.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Snook and Red Drum

- Evaluate management philosophies, goals, and regulations



Spotted Seatrout

- Various stakeholder concerns from around the state
- Updated stock assessment
- Stakeholder satisfaction survey late 2018



Snook photo courtesy of Melanie Flower | Seatrout photo courtesy of Cole Kendall.

Snook and Red Drum

FWC has committed to working with stakeholders to evaluate snook and red drum management philosophies, goals, and regulations. Stakeholder requests for snook include an extended catch-and-release fishery for portions of the Gulf coast, wider slot limit on the Atlantic, and further regional management. Red drum-related requests include further regionalization of management to address localized depletion in portions of the state.

Spotted Seatrout

Spotted seatrout is one of 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 stakeholder satisfaction survey will be conducted in late 2018 and staff expects to bring a potential draft rule before the Commission as early as February 2019.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Trap Fisheries Management

- Long-term project to evaluate and improve trap fisheries management
 - Multi-fishery sustainability
 - Achieve trap reduction goals
 - Address user conflicts and industry requests



Federal Legislation

- Staff continue to monitor Congressional activities and advocate FWC's positions
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) reauthorization



Trap Fisheries Management

There are multiple issues associated with Florida's recreational and commercial trap fisheries that have been identified and warrant further consideration in the coming years. Many of these issues are complex, long-term projects and require close coordination with commercial and recreational stakeholders. This long-term management project will continue into the current workplan.

Federal Legislation

Staff will continue to monitor Congressional activities and advocate for positions that are best for Florida's marine fisheries. Staff remains engaged with ongoing discussions about reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Goliath Grouper

- Continue research and monitoring
- Commission considering setting a management goal for state waters



Gulf Reef Fish Survey (GRFS) Expansion to State Reef Fish Permit

- Expires June 2020
- Expanding to the Atlantic



Goliath Grouper

The Commission is considering a management goal for goliath grouper in state waters. In federal waters, the Gulf and South Atlantic council adopted 50% spawning potential ratio (SPR) as the federal goliath management goal. SPR is used as a management goal in other state-managed fisheries, such as snook, red drum, and trout. FWC will continue to research goliath grouper and monitor its recovery off Florida, with the goal to provide the Commission a stock status update in 2021 or 2022.

Gulf Reef Fish Survey (GRFS) Expansion to State Reef Fish Permit

GRFS expires in June 2020. Commission expressed interest in expanding GRFS to the Atlantic, and a proposal will be brought forward for Commission consideration.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

IFQ 5-year Review

- Gulf Grouper IFQ put in place in 2010
- Gulf Council will propose potential changes
- State rulemaking may be warranted



Red Snapper

- Gulf Council is considering management options
- Commission rulemaking may be considered
- South Atlantic Council working to decrease release mortality and develop a more robust stock assessment



Gulf grouper photo courtesy of Allen Starr

IFQ 5-Year Review

The Gulf Council implemented an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program for the commercial harvest of groupers in 2010. The program's five-year review will examine potential changes suggested by industry, Council Advisory Panels, and the Council's Socioeconomic Science and Statistical Committee. If state rulemaking is warranted, staff will bring potential changes for state waters to a future Commission meeting.

Red Snapper

The Gulf Council is considering a wide variety of potential management strategies for red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, including state management of the recreational fishery, a for-hire IFQ program, and changes to sector separation. Depending on the action taken by the Gulf Council, the Commission may wish to consider complimentary regulations for state waters.

The South Atlantic Council is working to decrease post-release mortality for red snapper and other reef fish. The Council and NOAA Fisheries are also working to develop a more robust stock assessment for Atlantic red snapper.

2019-2020 High Priority Items – Carry-over

Sector Reallocation

- The Councils will be discussing triggers and criteria for sector reallocation decisions
- Also, could begin discussing reallocation of several species
- Staff may seek direction from the Commission on specific reallocation options



Sector Reallocation

The Councils will be discussing triggers and criteria for sector reallocation decisions. Also, they could begin discussing reallocation of several species. This review is a directive from the Council Coordinating Committee and NOAA Fisheries. FWC staff will need to stay involved in the conversations and may need to engage the Commission for direction on specific reallocation options.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – New

Dolphin

- Concerns about low abundance in the Keys and SE Florida
- Large knowledge gaps about stock status
- South Atlantic Council will consider a suite of management options



Limits on Otherwise Unregulated Species

- Periodic concerns regarding overharvest of unregulated species
 - Blackfin tuna
 - Crevalle jack
 - Sand seatrout



Crevalle photo courtesy of Dale Robinson



Dolphin

For the last several years, stakeholders in the Keys and southeastern Florida have voiced concerns about low dolphin abundance and loss of a year-round fishery. However, charter captains and private recreational anglers concede that abundance can vary from year to year. In 2017, the SAFMC implemented a 4,000-lb. trip limit for the commercial fishery after 75% of the quota has been caught. Concerned recreational stakeholders have requested a year-round commercial trip limit of 4,000 pounds or less. There have also been requests for reduced recreational bag limits. Despite the popularity of this fishery, there are large knowledge gaps about the migration pattern of dolphin and stock status. South Atlantic Council will be considering a suite of management options for dolphin in the upcoming workplan year.

Limits on Otherwise Unregulated Species

Stakeholders periodically express concerns about overharvest of unregulated species (blackfin tuna, Crevalle jack, grunts, sand seatrout, etc.). Some of these are current or past workplan items. Establishing a default recreational bag limit (10 fish for example) could be one way to address many species without bag limits that will not have stock assessments anytime in the foreseeable future.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – New

Restricted Species (RS) Qualification

- Qualifying sales requirements
- Crew share
- Other exemptions



Spearing Issues

- Bowfishing
- Spearfishing under anchored boats



Spearing photo courtesy of Mike Duggan

Restricted Species (RS) Qualification

Qualifying Sales Requirements – Commercial fishermen have complained that the standard qualification requirements are not stringent enough to prevent influx of part-time fishermen and have requested sales requirements be increased.

Crew Share – Stakeholders have expressed concerns about the misuse of the crew share exemption for obtaining an RS, reporting that it allows anglers to “buy” an RS. Staff worked to determine ideas for how to address this concern when the vessel purchase exemption was updated in 2015, but were unable to find a way to address without negatively affecting the fishermen that are using the exemption appropriately.

Other Exemptions – Staff addressed vessel purchase exemption abuse in 2015, but may need to consider further changes to ensure that we are effectively addressing intent of RS endorsement.

Spearing Issues

Bowfishing – Concern that the areas people are bowfishing (i.e. bridges, seawalls, mangrove shorelines) are also popular inshore snorkeling spots. Bowfishers feel that they are only a small group participating in the activity, while citizens are concerned about the resource (targeting aggregations of spawning black drum) and public safety.

Spearfishing Under Anchored Boats – In certain areas, freedivers enter the water to drive/spearfish around already anchored hook-and-line fishermen. This is causing frustration from anchored boats who often chum fish to their boat, feeling as though the spearfishermen are unfairly taking the fish they attracted.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Blackfin Tuna

- Not regulated in state or federal waters
- Stakeholder concerns that anglers are taking advantage of the lack of regulations and harvesting too many small fish



Citizen Science

- Desire by recreational community to become involved
- Exploring ways to incorporate angler-reported data into assessments
- South Atlantic Council has initiative on this topic



Blackfin Tuna

Blackfin tuna are not currently regulated by FWC in state or in federal waters. They are not a highly migratory species; therefore, they are not under the management authority of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Highly Migratory Species (HMS) like other tuna species. Florida has the ability and authority to regulate them in state and federal waters. The main concerns expressed by stakeholders are an increase in total harvest and the small size of fish harvested.

Citizen Science Opportunities

Many recreational fishers would like to become involved in data collection for various fisheries. FWRI and the South Atlantic Council are currently exploring ways angler-reported data can be easily obtained and used for stock assessments.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Fisheries Management Outreach

- FWC continues to work on promoting fishing and providing educational opportunities within the community
- Educational materials will also be reviewed and revised



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Planning

- FKNMS working on rezoning process
- FWC role in commenting, input, and potential rulemaking



Fisheries Management Outreach

FWC continues to work on promoting fishing opportunities within the community. Members of the public have suggested that more information be made available to visitors. Some suggested creating publications targeting specific types of fishers. Other members of the public would like to see a website that is easier to navigate. Staff could potentially translate FWC's status and trends document for the public, and publicize positive news via press release, social media, etc.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Planning

FKNMS is working on their rezoning process and FWC will have a role in commenting, input, and potential rulemaking. Recommendations from advisory groups have been passed to FKNMS for evaluation, including requests for a few more no-take reserves that could be located in state waters. FWC staff are engaged in the process and will bring updates to the Commission.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Flounder

- Angler concerns about status of flounder in Panhandle and northeast Florida
- Regulations could be modified or extended into federal waters



Import Size Limits

- Request to allow import of undersized reef fish from other countries



Flounder photo courtesy of Dave Lutzford | Reef fish photo courtesy of Michael Spies

Flounder

Many anglers have voiced concerns about the flounder stocks in various parts of the state, particularly in the Panhandle and northeast Florida. There is no management of flounder in federal waters. The Commission may want to consider extending its regulations into federal waters and/or modifying the existing state waters flounder regulations.

Import Size Limits

Import size limits for snappers, groupers, and other reef fish establish the minimum size for many species being imported into or through Florida. Other U.S. states and Canada do not specify import size limits. Florida importers have requested they be allowed to import undersized reef fish from other countries.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Mullet

- Discard issues associated with the roe fishery
- Request for regional regulatory changes
- Rule cleanup



Predator Species and Nuisance Behavior

- Concern that certain species are interfering with fishing activity



Mullet

Increased participation in the mullet roe fishery in recent years continues to result in discard-related issues. Staff is working with the fishery to address these problems and will evaluate if management changes are needed. Staff has also received requests to remove a local law related to reduced bag limits for mullet during the roe season and to consider lifting the weekend closure for silver mullet on the Atlantic coast. The rule cleanup team is also nearing completion of a cleaned up version of the mullet regulations that could come before the Commission early in 2019.

Predator Species and Nuisance Behavior

Staff has heard concerns that species such as goliath grouper, sharks, and bottlenose dolphin are interfering with fishing activity.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Special Activity License (SAL) Updates

- Update SAL regulations
- Amending provisions of existing SALs
- Potentially add new SALs



Spot and Atlantic Croaker

- ASMFC revising current management plan
- Assessment update
- Potential need for rule changes



Special Activity License (SAL) Updates

Staff have identified a series of updates that would improve the operation of the SAL program. These include updates to application forms, definitions, and policies incorporated by reference; the need to address how an SAL interacts with other permits issued by other parts of the agency or other entities; providing for situations that do not require an SAL; deleting provisions that are no longer necessary; as well as potentially adding new types/categories of SALs. We may also need to address the collection of application processing fees in association with the issuance of SALs.

Spot and Atlantic Croaker

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is revising their current Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for these species. FWRI is involved in the assessment. If the FMP changes, FWC may need to consider rule changes.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Atlantic Deepwater Species

- Requests for consistency with federal snowy grouper regulation in state waters



Cobia

- Federal assessments scheduled to begin 2018/2019
- Gulf Council recently adopted size limit changes



Snowy grouper photo courtesy of NOAA

Atlantic Deepwater Species

Staff has received requests to make the state season consistent with Atlantic federal rules.

Cobia

Federal assessments are scheduled to begin in late 2018 (Atlantic) and 2019 (Gulf). In the meantime, the Gulf Council recently took final action to increase the minimum size limit in Gulf federal waters to 36 inches, but opted not to go consistent with FWC's bag and vessel limit. This size limit change is pending approval by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Electronic Reporting

- Federal wholesale dealers and federally-permitted headboats already required to report electronically
- Electronic reporting for federal charter vessels coming soon
- Voluntary electronic platforms in place for recreational red snapper



Lobster Trap Exclusion Zones in Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park

- Zone boundaries in rule do not match those marked on the water
- Staff will work with the State Park and stakeholders to optimize these zones and update the rule



Electronic Reporting

Federal wholesale dealers are required to report electronically and federal commercial harvesters can submit their federal logbooks electronically as of July 2018. The Gulf Red Snapper iAngler app provides a platform for state captains and anglers to voluntarily report as part of the EFP pilot program. SAFMC uses a similar application for voluntary reporting of Atlantic red snapper by private anglers. Federally-permitted headboats in the Gulf and South Atlantic are already required to report electronically. Federal charter electronic reporting will be implemented in the Gulf and South Atlantic over the next year.

Lobster Trap Exclusion Zones in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park

There are a series of no-lobster trap zones in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park to protect the Park's corals. The zone boundaries in rule do not match those marked on the water. Staff will work with John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park and stakeholders to optimize these zones and update the rule.

2019-2020 Medium Priority Items – Carry-over

Gray (Mangrove) Snapper

- Stakeholder concerns about state and federal size and bag limit discrepancies
- Gulf Council considering changes to ABC, ACL, and management thresholds



Mangrove photo courtesy of Mackley Herzig

Gray (Mangrove) Snapper

Stakeholders are asking for consistency between state and federal bag and size limits (currently five fish at 10 in. in state waters, and 10 fish at 12 in. in federal waters). However, smaller fish are found in state waters, so the inconsistent regulations may be appropriate. The Gulf Council is considering changes to the acceptable biological catch (ABC), annual catch limits (ACL), and management thresholds for the Gulf gray snapper stock.

2019-2020 Low Priority Items – Carry-over

Cownose Rays

- Increasing harvest pressure due to bowfishing
- Concerns that excessive harvest in some areas may not be sustainable



Horseshoe Crabs

- Biomedical permit concerns
- Florida's already small populations may be adversely impacted by biomedical collection



Cownose Rays

Staff has heard reports of fishermen in the Panhandle bowfishing for cownose rays and then discarding them. In Southwest Florida, there are also complaints about excessive harvest of cownose rays used for shark fishing bait. There are concerns that this increased level of harvest is not sustainable.

Horseshoe Crab

Additional restrictions related to the issuance of a biomedical permit for collection of horseshoe crab blood may be appropriate. Requests have been made for FWC to incorporate collection limits. Florida horseshoe crab populations are small and Florida horseshoe crabs are smaller-sized than they are in other states. There is a horseshoe crab quota established by ASMFC for the American eel fishery, and while we are unlikely to exceed the coastwide bait quota for all Atlantic states, there is a substantial Marine Life harvest. Staff has been monitoring to see if this issue develops further.

2019-2020 Low Priority Items – Carry-over

Marine Life Management

- Requests for additional allowable gear
- Aquarium enthusiasts selling/exchanging marine life species
- New trends analysis being conducted



Orange Cup Coral

- Non-native and invasive species of stony coral
- FWRI researching potential impacts of removal efforts



Top: photo courtesy of Nancy Sheridan

Marine Life Management

Marine Life Gear – Stakeholders have requested the use of a flexible blade to be included as allowable gear type for sea anemones.

Hobbyist Sales – Aquarium enthusiasts sometimes sell/exchange marine life species (and corals) that they are propagating in personal aquariums. Some of these organisms are native while others are not; however, there is no mechanism in the marine life rule to allow sale of these hobbyist bred organisms.

Marine Life Trends Analysis – In 2013, a marine life species trend analysis was completed to evaluate annual landings, catch per unit effort (CPUE), and ex-vessel prices. The report summary recommended a closer evaluation on the taxonomic group of sea anemones and thin-stripe (green striped) hermit crab, and highlighted trends that might warrant a moderate level of concern for a variety of other species. A new Marine Life Trends Analysis is expected to be completed in 2019.

Orange Cup Coral

Orange cup coral is an invasive species of stony coral that the South Atlantic Council Coral Advisory Panel (AP) wants to remove from the federal FMP. However, this could cause more damage by encouraging people to harvest it and chip away at natural and artificial reefs in the process. There are also concerns that incomplete removal may facilitate the spread of this invasive species. FWC is conducting research to identify ways to facilitate removal. This would require changes to state regulations to allow harvest/removal.

2019-2020 Low Priority Items – Carry-over

Slipper Lobster

- Concerns over population decline, particularly in the Panhandle



Blueline Tilefish

- Deep-water species that can be caught in state waters
- South Atlantic Council considering regulation changes
- Not regulated in Atlantic state waters



Slipper Lobster

FWC staff has been hearing concerns about declining numbers of slipper lobster in the Panhandle. Currently, they are unregulated except that egg-bearing females cannot be harvested. There is no indication that there is a biological problem across the species' range. Stakeholder observations could be a result of increased harvest in localized areas.

Blueline Tilefish

Blueline tilefish is a deep-water species that can be caught in state waters off southeast Florida. The South Atlantic Council implemented new regulations for blueline tilefish in 2016, and is considering additional regulations for it and other deep-water species. New federal regulations may include recreational fishing seasons and an aggregate bag limit for blueline tilefish and other deep-water groupers and tilefish. Although they can be caught in state waters, they are currently unregulated by FWC, which means recreational harvesters in state waters can exceed the federal waters bag limit of three fish when fishing in state waters. The Commission may want to consider rulemaking for state waters.