

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: February 20, 2019
Subject: Bay Scallops – Draft Rule (version 2)

Purpose:

Obtain approval for draft rules that would modify bay scallop regulations in 68B-18, Florida Administrative Code (FAC). Staff will also be seeking approval to establish short-term bay scallop seasons for 2019 in Gulf County and for 2020 in Pasco County through Executive Orders (EOs).

Summary:

In 2017, the Commission approved a short-term regionally-specific bay scallop season structure as a pilot approach to balancing the variable desires of stakeholders, while still maintaining the sustainability of bay scallop populations. From 2017-2019, seasons were established through a series of EOs, including a new trial season in Pasco County for 2018 and 2019. Although 2019 seasons have been set for most of the harvest area, staff delayed setting a 2019 season in Gulf County until biological information to better understand the impacts of the 2018 red tide on scallops in St. Joseph Bay were available.

Following the 2018 season, staff conducted an online stakeholder satisfaction survey to gather feedback on bay scallop management and long-term desires for the fishery. In Feb. 2019, staff also conducted a public workshop in Gulf County to gather feedback on management desires for the 2019 Gulf County bay scallop season. The 2019 season for Gulf County will be considered as part of this item.

Staff will present a draft rule proposal that would establish a consistent long-term season for Franklin – Hernando counties (most of the bay scallop harvest area) from July 1 through September 24 beginning in 2020. This season proposal considers stakeholder feedback and conserves scallop populations. Staff are also presenting a draft rule proposal that would allow for the possession of bay scallops while transiting without stopping across areas closed to bay scallop harvest. Finally, staff propose establishing the 2019 season in Gulf County (Aug. 16 – Sept. 15, 2019) and the 2020 season in Pasco County (July 17-26, 2020) through EOs to allow flexibility to evaluate ongoing restoration efforts and environmental factors in Gulf County and potential bay scallop population needs in Pasco County.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval of the proposed draft rules as presented. If approved, staff will return for a final public hearing at the May 2019 Commission meeting. Approval of the requested Executive Orders and direction to return in early 2020 with draft rules as needed for Gulf and Pasco Counties.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management