

2020-2021 Marine Fisheries Workplan



Review and Discussion
July 22, 2020



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

This is a review and discussion of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management's (DMFM) proposed 2020-2021 workplan. This workplan is for the period from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. Workplan 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

Authors: Jessica McCawley, Stephanie Link, Krista Shipley, and Martha Guyas

Contact Phone Number: 850-487-0554

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

Background

What is the Marine Fisheries Management workplan?

- Management priorities for coming year
- DMFM and FWRI meet annually to coordinate management and research
- Review fishery issues and concerns
- Prioritize staff efforts and develop timelines
- Determine management steps

Well-coordinated workplan maximizes productivity and efficiency



The Marine Fisheries Management 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.

What Items are on the Workplan?

Considerations

- Resource concerns – regional, statewide, and federal
- Stock assessment schedule

Prioritizing workplan items

- High interest marine issues at state and federal levels
- Some long-term, multi-year projects

Timelines vary

- Complexity and urgency
- Level of stakeholder coordination needed



A number of considerations go into determining which topics will be included in the marine fisheries management workplan for a given year. Foremost are concerns about resource sustainability and conservation. These resource concerns could be at a regional, statewide, or federal level. The timing and frequency of state and federal stock assessments also affect which items staff may work on and the timing of staff bringing them forward for Commission consideration.

The number of marine issues is large and diverse and thus requires prioritization each year. There are a number of challenges associated with prioritizing the items 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. Some items chosen for the workplan are already known to be long-term, 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.

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.

Fly-in Items

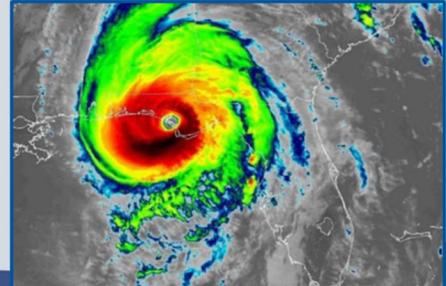
Need to maintain flexibility

- Emerging issues often arise mid-workplan
- Fly-in types vary
 - Environmental problems or fishery issues
 - Increased interest around previously-identified issues

Reprioritization of efforts required

Trade-offs with shifting priorities

- Research and monitoring may need to be redirected
- May delay progress on long-term projects



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 maintain flexibility and work together with the Commission to determine how to address these fly-ins and decide whether to begin work on them mid-workplan. 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 priority.

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 can be 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.

Fly-in: Economic Relief and Recovery

Hurricane Irma

- Severely impacted most of Florida's fishing industry
- Florida received \$44.5 million for fisheries disaster relief
- Financial assistance to 2,700 fishermen, 960 charters, and 350 wholesale dealers

Hurricane Michael

- Devastating damage to Panhandle (\$68.9 million)
- Florida receiving \$7.8 million for fisheries disaster relief
- Working on a spend plan

CARES Act – Addresses COVID-19 Pandemic

- Portion provides economic relief to fishermen
 - Florida receiving \$23.6 million
- Working on a spend plan



Since 2017, Florida fishing industries have been impacted by multiple catastrophic events. These events required a re-prioritization of the Division's workplan. In 2017, Florida was struck by Hurricane Irma, which severely impacted fishing industries throughout much of the state. Damage estimates to fishing-related businesses and vessels reached \$93.2 million and estimated revenue losses were \$129.7 million. After the Secretary of Commerce declared a fisheries disaster based on a request from former-Governor Scott, Congress and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) allocated \$44.5 million for disaster relief to mitigate the effects of the storm on Florida's fishing industries. Under the Chairman's direction, FWC submitted a spending plan that was ultimately approved by NOAA in June 2019. Since that time, FWC has provided financial assistance to more than 2,700 fishermen, 960 charters, and 350 commercial wholesale dealers; developed plans to improve fisheries habitat; reached out to local governments to assist in repairing fishing infrastructure; and provided assistance to rescue corals in front of a devastating coral disease. There is more to do to provide needed financial assistance to affected fishermen, improve habitats, improve fishing infrastructure and to rescue healthy corals.

In 2018, Hurricane Michael devastated the fishing industries in the Florida Panhandle. Estimated damages to the fishing community included \$45 million in damages to businesses and vessels and \$23.9 million in lost revenues. Responding to a request by former-Governor Scott, the Secretary of Commerce declared a fisheries disaster for the Panhandle. Congress and NOAA allocated \$7.8 million to mitigate the losses and staff are currently working on a spend plan.

The CARES Act, meant to address the economic fallout of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic in the United States, was passed by Congress and signed by the President on March 26, 2020. A portion of this bill provides economic relief to fishermen. Florida is receiving \$23.6 million and staff are working on a spend plan.

Highlights of 2019-2020 Accomplishments

- Biscayne National Park
- Gulf red snapper state management
- Shore-based shark fishing
- Blue Heron Bridge
- Blackfin tuna
- Bay scallops
- Spotted seatrout
- Recreational crab trap registration
- State Reef Fish Survey
- Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary comments



Despite multiple fly-in items requiring rapid response and shifts in staff effort, staff completed a number of high and medium priority items during the previous workplan that extended from Jan. 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. Highlights of those accomplishments are listed on this slide and include, but are not limited to, promulgating fisheries regulations inside Biscayne National Park, state management of Gulf red snapper, and the creation of shore-based shark fishing regulations and education tools. Staff also established regulations prohibiting the collection of marine life species at Blue Heron Bridge and modified regional regulations for bay scallops and spotted seatrout. Additionally, staff implemented a recreational crab trap registration, expanded the Gulf Reef Fish Survey statewide to become the State Reef Fish Survey, and provided comments on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary's Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Proposed 2020-2021 Workplan Items

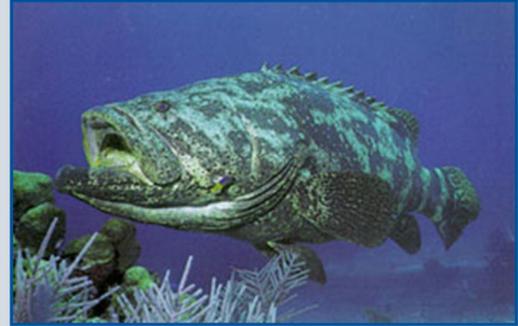
HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
<div style="border: 1px solid purple; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> CARES Act Casitas Diamondback Terrapin SW Florida Red Tide Gulf Gray Triggerfish Gulf Red Grouper </div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> Irma and Michael Recovery Agency Strategic Planning Corals Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Planning Flounder Lionfish Oysters Sharks Trap Fisheries Management MRIP Recalibration Dolphin Electronic Reporting Federal Legislation Gulf Commercial IFQ Updates Gulf Greater Amberjack Red Snapper </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid purple; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> African Pompano Bluefish Jack Crevalle Habitat </div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> Citizen Science Fisheries Management Outreach Permit Shrimp SAL Updates Aquaculture Atlantic Blueline Tilefish and Snowy Grouper Cobia </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid purple; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Sand Seatrout Spanish Mackerel </div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> Marine Life Management (aquarium trade) Orange Cup Coral Spot and Atlantic Croaker </div>
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid purple; width: 15px; height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;"></div> = New </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; width: 15px; height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;"></div> = Carry-over </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> Blue = Federal item </div> </div>



This is a list of DMFM's proposed 2020-2021 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 41 items listed, 12 are new items for the upcoming workplan. Items in black are state issues and those in blue bold are federal issues. Overall, there are 26 state issues and 15 federal issues.

Research to Inform Future Management

- Goliath grouper
- State Reef Fish Survey
- Tortugas Ecological Reserves
- Oysters
- Atlantic red snapper
- Coral restoration
- Casitas
- Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Task Force



There are a number of topics of interest or concern that are not on the proposed Marine Fisheries Management 2020-2021 workplan. Those items are, however, still of utmost importance to the division and Agency. This slide references research projects FWRI is working on that will inform future management and, although some of those items are not included in this workplan cycle, FWC is still actively working on them behind the scenes to better guide management of our marine resources in the years to come.

Long-term Management Projects

- Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
- Trap fisheries
- Oysters
- Atlantic red snapper
- Federal legislation
- Habitat



Maintaining momentum toward completing long-term management projects is vital to achieving division and Agency objectives. Long-term management projects are especially complex and require extensive work with stakeholders and/or partners over several years. Examples of these long-term management projects on the proposed 2020-2021 workplan include the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, trap fisheries management, oysters, Atlantic red snapper, federal legislation, and habitat. These are generally multi-year projects that will continue into future workplan cycles.

Staff Recommendation

Approve the proposed 2020-2021 workplan

- Maintain flexibility to address fly-in items as they arise
- Staff welcomes additional direction



Staff recommends approving the 2020-2021 workplan.

Due to unanticipated circumstances or arising issues, staff recognizes fly-in items not on the workplan may occur throughout this workplan year. Staff needs to maintain flexibility to address fly-in items as they arise. Staff welcomes additional direction from the Commission on our proposed list of workplan items.

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



Checklist of 2019-2020 Workplan Items

HIGH

- ✓ Bay Scallops
- ✓ Biscayne National Park
- ✓ Blue Heron Bridge
- ✓ NE FL Shrimp
- ✓ Shore-based Shark Fishing
- ✓ Spotted Seatrout
- ✓ **Dusky Shark & Shortfin Mako**

- Corals
- Sharks
- Shrimp
- Trap Fisheries Management
- **Dolphin**
- **Electronic Reporting**
- **IFQ 5-Year Review**
- **Sector Reallocation**
- **State Reef Fish Survey**
- **Yellowtail Snapper**

- ∞ Agency Strategic Planning
- ∞ Irma & Michael Recovery
- ∞ Lionfish
- ∞ Oysters
- ∞ Rule Cleanup
- ∞ **Federal Legislation**
- ∞ **Red Snapper**
- ∞ **Sector Reallocation**

- ❖ **Aquaculture**
- ❖ **Goliath Grouper**

MEDIUM

- ✓ Blackfin Tuna
- ✓ Tarpon
- ✓ **Mangrove Snapper**

- Fisheries Management Outreach
- Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Planning
- Flounder
- Lobster Trap Exclusion Zones in Pennekamp
- Mullet
- Permit
- RS Qualification
- SAL Updates
- Spot and Atlantic Croaker
- **Cobia**

- ∞ Citizen Science
- ∞ Habitat and Water Quality

LOW

- **Blueline Tilefish & Snowy Grouper**
- Cownose Rays
- Horseshoe Crab
- Marine Life Management (aquarium trade)
- Orange Cup Coral
- Slipper Lobster

- ✓ Completed
- Carry-over
- ∞ Ongoing
- ❖ On hold
- Blue** = Federal item



This is a checklist of the items on the 2019-2020 workplan that extended through June 30, 2020. 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 bold text are federal items and items in black are state items. *Carry-over* items are those staff expected to complete in 2019-2020 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 2020-2021 workplan. Of the 50 items listed, 11 are *completed*, and 29 will roll over into the 2020-2021 workplan. There are 10 items considered to be *ongoing*.

Stock Assessments

State

2020

Red drum
Snook
Yellowtail snapper

Federal

2020

Greater amberjack – Atlantic
Greater Amberjack – Gulf
King mackerel – Gulf and Atlantic
Red porgy – Atlantic
Snowy grouper – Atlantic
Vermilion snapper – Gulf
Black tip shark – Atlantic

2021

Gag grouper – Atlantic
Gag grouper – Gulf
Golden tilefish – Atlantic
Gray snapper – Gulf
Red snapper – Atlantic

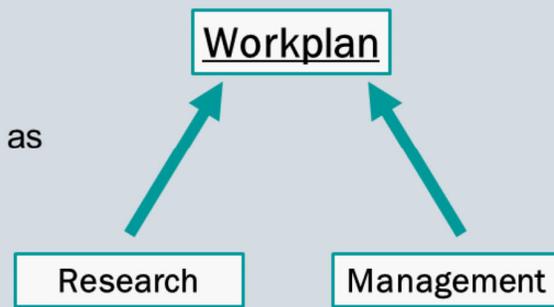


This is a list of the state and federal stock assessments that are expected to be completed during the 2020 and 2021 calendar years. Rulemaking associated with these assessments could occur during the upcoming workplan year.

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

Item classifications

- Ongoing – long-term, multi-year projects that 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.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: New

CARES Act

- Addresses COVID-19 pandemic
- Portion of the bill provides economic relief to fishermen



Casitas

- Suggested for commercial lobster dive industry
- Poses multiple potential challenges
 - Legality/jurisdiction
 - User conflicts



CARES Act

The CARES Act, meant to address the economic fallout of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic in the United States, was passed by Congress and signed by the President on March 26, 2020. A portion of this bill provides economic relief to fishermen. Florida is receiving \$23.6 million and staff is working on a spend plan.

Casitas

These structures are placed on the seafloor to attract and aggregate lobsters so that they can be easier for divers to locate and harvest. Although similar structures have been traditionally used by lobster fishermen elsewhere in the Caribbean, their use is currently illegal in Florida. FWC Commissioners have suggested legalizing the use of casitas for lobster harvest by divers as a way to remove traps from the fishery. Staff will explore the jurisdictional hurdles for placement of these structures on the seafloor as well as user conflict issues if they are intended to replace trap harvest.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: New

Diamondback Terrapin

- Bycatch in blue crab traps
- Request to require bycatch reduction devices in blue crab traps



SW Florida Red Tide

- Red tide bloom from Nov. 2017 – Feb. 2019
- Affected over 100 miles of SW FL coastline
- Governor requested federal fishery disaster declaration



Diamondback Terrapin

FWC received a formal petition from the Center for Biological Diversity to require bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in blue crab traps to minimize bycatch of diamondback terrapins. DMFM staff is working with FWRI and HSC staff on this item.

SW Florida Red Tide

In November 2017, a red tide bloom appeared near southwest Florida and persisted until February 2019, affecting over 100 miles of Florida's coast. In response to the widespread physical and economic losses from this event, Governor Ron DeSantis requested a declaration of a federal fishery disaster by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce in May 2019. Any funds awarded would provide necessary support to the affected commercial and recreational fishing industries.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: New

Gulf Gray Triggerfish

- Undergoing overfishing
- History of quota closure and overruns
- Anglers report recovering stock



Gulf Red Grouper

- Neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing
- Stock below management target
- Angler concerns of declining stock



Gulf Gray Triggerfish

A stock assessment for Gulf gray triggerfish was scheduled to be completed in early 2020 but was abandoned due to significant data issues. NOAA's Southeast Fisheries Science Center will now perform an interim analysis to provide catch advice in the short-term (likely for 2021) until a new assessment can be completed. Although this stock has been classified as undergoing overfishing, and is plagued with quota closures and overruns, angler reports from the Panhandle and Alabama indicate that the fishery in that area appears to be recovering.

Gulf Red Grouper

The most recent stock assessment indicates red grouper is not overfished or undergoing overfishing, but the stock is below management targets and was likely significantly impacted by the 2018 red tide event. For the past several years, commercial and recreational fishermen have reported declines and concerns for the Gulf red grouper stock. The new stock assessment incorporates new MRIP Fishing Effort Survey (FES) estimates, which more than doubled the estimates of recreational red grouper harvest compared to the previous effort survey, which has implications for sector allocations.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Hurricane Irma Recovery

- Florida received \$44.6 million from NOAA for fisheries disaster relief
- FWC has 4 years to spend the funds



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



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 then-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 Florida to provide relief for post-Irma recovery. Then-Governor Scott asked FWC to take the lead on developing a plan for utilizing these funds. FWC developed a plan to spend these funds, incorporating feedback from various stakeholder groups, and has four years to spend these funds.

Hurricane Michael Recovery

Hurricane Michael made landfall at Mexico Beach on Wednesday, Oct. 10, 2018, as a Category 5 storm and caused major damage to coastal and inland areas of Florida's Panhandle from Panama City to St. Marks. On Oct. 24, 2018, then-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. Staff is working on a spend plan to submit to NOAA to address impacts to recreational and commercial fisheries.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Agency Strategic Planning

- Staff participation in cross-divisional strategic planning efforts and initiatives



Corals

- Ongoing disease event
- Disease response and restoration are focal points for both management and research



Agency Strategic Plan

DMFM staff will continue to participate in the agency-wide effort to develop and implement the new Agency Strategic Plan.

Corals

Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) has continued to significantly impact the Florida Reef Tract and the only areas of Florida that are not yet affected are parts of the Marquesas and the Tortugas. SCTLD has also spread to many other areas of the Caribbean (Jamaica, Mexican Caribbean, Sint Maarten, St. Thomas USVI, Dominican Republic, Turks and Caicos Islands, Belize, Sint Eustatius, Puerto Rico, The Bahamas). FWC continues to provide a strong leadership role in coral disease research, management and response, while also planning for restoration efforts in the wake of the disease. To this point, as part of FWC's comment letter to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) regarding the "Restoration Blueprint", a focal emphasis was placed on coral restoration and recovery. Proposed new marine zones within state waters of the Sanctuary, including those designed to protect coral reef habitat and coral nurseries, would require rule promulgation by FWC. Although the FKNMS process is ongoing, staff will hold workshops at a future date to obtain public feedback and will consider rulemaking options at that time to better protect the Florida Reef Tract within the FKNMS.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

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



Flounder

- FWRI stock status update and angler concerns suggest need for management changes



Flounder photo courtesy of Dave Lunsford

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS)

FKNMS has proposed in a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) to expand the boundary of the sanctuary, update sanctuary-wide regulations, update the individual marine zones and their associated regulations, and revise the sanctuary management plan. FWC has submitted their comment letter to the FKNMS pertaining to the proposals in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and will consider potential rulemaking for fisheries management items within state waters. FWC staff remain engaged in the process, will continue to work with stakeholders when the FKNMS releases a draft rule, and will bring updates to the Commission as directed.

Flounder

A stock status update completed by FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute found that the flounder fishery on the Atlantic coast of Florida is likely overfished and undergoing overfishing and that there has been a general decline in the fishery statewide in recent years. Over the past few years, staff has also heard a variety of concerns and requests for management changes in the flounder fishery. Based on the status update and these concerns, the Commission may want to consider potential rule changes to improve the long-term sustainability of the flounder fishery. There is currently no management of flounder in federal waters, so the Commission may want to consider extending any updated regulations into federal waters.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Lionfish

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



Oysters

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



Lionfish

Lionfish continue to pose a threat to Florida's reefs and ecosystems. 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.

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 in other parts of the state. Staff is 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 is also working with industry and other community-based groups in panhandle to address localized concerns unrelated to Apalachicola Bay's oyster fishery.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Sharks

- Fin sales
- Reports of increased depredation on other species



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



Sharks

Multiple Legislative and Congressional bills have been introduced that would either prohibit sale of legally-harvested shark fins or prohibit importation of fins. DMFM is working with our Legislative and Congressional partners on this issue and state rule changes may be needed in the future. Staff will also evaluate possible measures to address concerns about increased depredation of other species by sharks.

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.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

MRIP Recalibration

- Past catch estimates updated by NOAA
- FWC has significant concerns about validity and use of new method
- New method being used to set new quotas and revise allocations



Dolphin

- Low abundance concerns in Keys and SE Florida
- Large knowledge gaps about stock status
- South Atlantic Council considering suite of management options



Top: courtesy of Christopher Perry

MRIP Recalibration

Past recreational catch estimates have been recalibrated by NOAA Fisheries based on the shift from use of the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) to the Fishing Effort Survey (FES). FWC has noted significant concerns about validity and use of the FES estimates. Recalibrated estimates are being incorporated into new stock assessments, will ultimately be used for fisheries management at the federal level, including to set quotas, and have major implications for fisheries management and allocations.

Dolphin

For the 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 and a ban on harvest with pelagic longlines. There have also been requests for reduced recreational bag and vessel limits. Despite the popularity of this fishery, there are large knowledge gaps about the migration pattern of dolphin and stock status. The South Atlantic Council is considering a suite of management options for dolphin in the upcoming workplan year.

2020-2021 High 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



Federal Legislation

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



Electronic Reporting

Federal wholesale dealers are required to report electronically and NOAA Fisheries is working on a platform to allow federal commercial harvesters to submit their federal logbooks electronically. 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.

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.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Gulf Commercial IFQ Updates

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



Gulf Greater Amberjack

- Overfished stock
- Early quota closures in both recreational and commercial sectors in past years



Gag grouper photo courtesy of Allen Starr

Gulf Commercial IFQ Updates

The Gulf Council implemented the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) for the commercial harvest of groupers and tilefish in 2010. The Council is considering potential changes to the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ program, such as share ownership and creation of a quota bank. FWC incorporated federal IFQ regs into FWC rules; however, some updates to federal rule citations in state rules may be needed following any council rulemaking updates.

Gulf Greater Amberjack

Gulf greater amberjack is overfished, and both the recreational and commercial components have had a series of early quota closures over the past several years. Recently, the Gulf Council approved a reduction in the commercial trip limit to help extend the season that was implemented in May 2020. The Commission and many Florida for-hire operations are supportive of adjusting recreational regulations to allow more harvest opportunities and to ensure a spring (May) season.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Red Snapper

- FWC now managing Gulf recreational harvest in state and federal waters
- South Atlantic Council working to decrease release mortality and develop a more robust stock assessment



Sector Reallocation

- The Councils will begin discussing reallocation of several species
- Staff may seek direction from the Commission on specific reallocation options
- GAO report provided guidance on reallocation policy



Red Snapper

NOAA Fisheries recently delegated FWC long-term authority to manage red snapper harvest by private recreational anglers in Gulf federal waters. As such, the Commission annually reviews management measures like seasons for Gulf red snapper to provide opportunities for anglers while upholding the terms of this delegation.

The South Atlantic Council's descending device requirement, which should decrease post-release mortality for red snapper and other reef fish, took effect July 15, 2020. The Commission may want to consider a similar requirement. The Council and NOAA Fisheries are also working to develop a more robust stock assessment for Atlantic red snapper and FWRI is conducting special research projects. The next Atlantic red snapper stock assessment will be completed in 2021.

Sector Reallocation

The Councils will begin discussing sector reallocation for several species because of MRIP recalibration. FWC staff will need to stay involved in the conversations and may need to engage the Commission for direction on specific reallocation options. Recently, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) completed a report on sector allocations in Gulf and South Atlantic multi-use fisheries as directed by the Congressional Modern Fish Act. The report recommended the councils develop an allocation policy.

2020-2021 High Priority Items: Carry-over

Yellowtail Snapper

- Atlantic commercial fishery has experienced quota closures
- Commercial sector asking for management changes
- Stock assessment complete



Yellowtail Snapper

The Atlantic commercial yellowtail snapper fishery has experienced quota closures. 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, but these were placed on hold until assessment is completed. 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 2020 stock assessment and MRIP recalibration. The councils will take up yellowtail snapper discussions this year.

2020-2021 Medium Priority Items: New

African Pompano

- Unlimited trip limit in Gulf federal waters
- Aggregations relatively easy target by spear
- Stakeholder request for establishing a trip limit



Bluefish

- Jointly managed by MAFMC and ASMFC
- FWC to modify regulations to meet interstate compact



Top: courtesy of Brett Cardinal Bottom: courtesy of Griffin Kirby

African Pompano

FWC's African Pompano recreational bag limit is 2 per person, but a vessel limit of no more than 2 per vessel. These regulations apply in both Gulf state and federal waters. There is some support to see African pompano regulations modified in Gulf federal waters. FWC has heard comments from a recreational for-hire captain who would like the recreational bag limit to be 1 per person. FWC's commercial regulations require a SPL and RS, but harvesters can harvest unlimited quantities in Gulf federal waters. Stakeholders have requested the establishment of a reasonable trip limit. African pompano are schooling fish that congregate over large artificial structure which make them easy to spear.

Bluefish

The Atlantic bluefish fishery is managed cooperatively by the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) in federal waters and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in state waters. A 2019 federal stock assessment concluded that bluefish were overfished but overfishing was not occurring. Due to the recent assessment, the MAFMC adopted a recreational bag limit of 3 fish per person for private recreational anglers and 5 fish per person when on a for-hire trip, and ASMFC requested states require this bag limit or a conservation equivalency. In response to the ASMFC request, FWC will have to modify current bluefish regulations to maintain compliance with the ASMFC Bluefish Fishery Management Plan.

2020-2021 Medium Priority Items: New

Jack Crevalle

- Currently unregulated
- Stakeholder concern for declining stock



Habitat

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



Crevalle photo courtesy of Clay Robinson

Jack Crevalle

Bonefish Tarpon Trust and other stakeholders have expressed concerns about jack crevalle. They report seeing fewer fish in the flats, especially in the Keys. More and more stakeholders in recent months have been coming to FWC with their concerns on this species. Future pro-active management action may be needed, such as what we considered for blackfin tuna.

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 marine habitat issues. In response, staff is working to increase Agency involvement in management of marine fishery habitats.

2020-2021 Medium Priority Items: Carry-over

Citizen Science

- Desire by community to become involved
- Exploring ways to incorporate angler-reported data into assessments



Fisheries Management Outreach

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



Citizen Science Opportunities

Many 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.

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.

2020-2021 Medium Priority Items: Carry-over

Permit

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



Shrimp

- Long-term project to update and streamline statewide and regional regulations
 - Re-consider existing spatial closures
 - Correcting boundary lines



Permit photo courtesy of Bryon Chamberlin

Permit

Permit are the basis of an iconic and lucrative sport fishery. Staff has 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.

Shrimp

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 spatial closures and correcting the Tortugas Shrimp Sanctuary boundary lines.

2020-2021 Medium Priority Items: Carry-over

Special Activity License (SAL) Updates

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

A screenshot of a web-based application form for a Special Activity License (SAL) from the Florida Department of Natural Resources. The form includes fields for applicant name, address, phone number, and email. It also has checkboxes for 'I am applying for the following activity' and 'I am applying for the following activity'. The form is titled 'Special Activity License Application' and includes a header with the Florida Department of Natural Resources logo and name.

Aquaculture

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



Aquaculture photo courtesy of Shutterstock



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 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.

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. FWC should be prepared to engage on this topic.

2020-2021 Medium Priority Items: Carry-over

Atlantic Blueline Tilefish and Snowy Grouper

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



Cobia

- Angler concerns from Panhandle
- Atlantic stock not overfished or undergoing overfishing
- Gulf assessment to be complete mid-2020



Snowy grouper photo courtesy of NOAA

Atlantic Blueline Tilefish and Snowy Grouper

Blueline tilefish and snowy grouper are deep-water species that can be caught in state waters off southeast Florida. Although they can be caught in state waters, blueline tilefish 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. There are additional inconsistencies between state and federal regulations for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper. These species are managed with small federal quotas, so federal management partners have requested FWC implement consistent regulations. Staff has begun gathering input on this issue. The Commission may want to consider rulemaking for state waters.

Cobia

Staff continue to hear some concern about the status of cobia, specifically in the Panhandle, and more recently in the Atlantic. The Gulf Cobia Update Assessment is expected to be completed mid-2020. The Gulf cobia stock ranges from the Gulf of Mexico up to the Florida/Georgia border. FWC considered, and ultimately decided not to, increase the minimum size limit for cobia in the Gulf of Mexico a few years ago. Since then, the Gulf Council has increased the size limit in Gulf federal waters. Staff may reevaluate cobia management after the Gulf assessment is complete.

2020-2021 Low Priority Items: New

Sand Seatrout

- Currently unregulated
- Perceived declines and high fishing pressure



Spanish Mackerel

- SE FL commercial harvester requests for regulation changes
 - Limited access fishery
 - Minimum mesh size cast nets
 - Modify vessel limits throughout the season



Sand Seatrout

Staff has heard requests from some anglers (primarily in the Big Bend) that FWC implement regulations for sand seatrout because of concerns about perceived declines and high fishing pressure.

Spanish Mackerel

Commercial fishermen in Southeast Florida have requested several changes to the Spanish mackerel fishery at both state and federal levels. They are concerned that effort is too high and desire a limited-access fishery, asked for a minimum mesh size for cast nets, and have also suggested FWC revise the state waters vessel limit throughout the season by Executive Order.

2020-2021 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 (MLTA) – In 2019, a marine life species trend analysis was completed to evaluate landings, catch per unit effort, and ex-vessel prices. This analysis included data for the period of 2005-2017 and recommended a closer evaluation of a variety of species. Therefore, an updated MLTA of those species identified as needing further evaluation is expected in late 2020, after the 2019 landings data are finalized.

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.

2020-2021 Low Priority Items: Carry-over

Spot and Atlantic Croaker

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



Spot and Atlantic Croaker

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has revised their Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for these species. FWRI was involved in an assessment that suggested management changes were needed to improve sustainability. In response, ASMFC revised their FMP, which requires FWC to modify regulations to remain in compliance.