



Federal Legislative Outlook

Review and Discussion

February 8, 2017

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Marine Fisheries Management

Introduction

- Last Congress (114th), several bills were relevant to the management of fish and wildlife in Florida
 - None of these bills became law
- 115th Congress began in January
- New presidential administration

- Today – Review bills introduced last Congress



2017 Appropriations

- No appropriations bill approved for 2017
- Federal government funded by Continuing Resolution at 2016 levels through April 28, 2017
 - Congressional action needed to continue funding through the end of the fiscal year (September 2017)
- Several appropriations bills had provisions that would affect fish and wildlife management in Florida



Congressional Bills Relating to Biscayne National Park



Four bills introduced last Congress opposing closure of a portion of the Park to fishing

- S. 3099 – Access for Sportfishing Act (Nelson, FL; Rubio, FL co-sponsored)
- S. 2807 – Preserving Access to Public Waters Act (Cassidy, LA; Rubio, FL co-sponsored)
- H.R. 3310 – Preserving Access to Public Waters Act (Ros-Lehtinen, FL; co-sponsored by 17 FL representatives)
- H.R. 5538 – Department of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act

FWC supported these bills



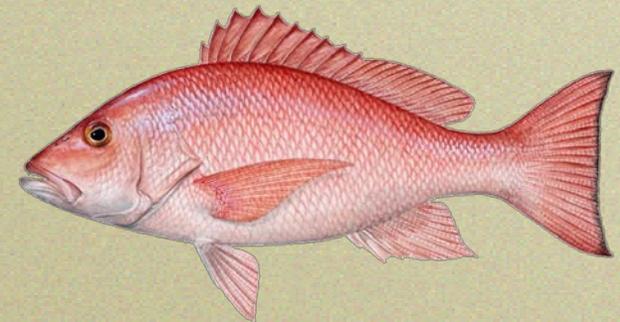
Congressional Bills Relating to Red Snapper

Transfer of Gulf red snapper management to the states

- H.R. 3094 – Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority Act (Graves, LA)
 - FWC support is contingent on removing commercial sector from the legislation

Stock assessments and data collection

- S. 2837 – Similar to provisions in 2016 Omnibus Appropriations Bill
 - Extension of state waters boundaries for reef fish to 9 nautical miles for all Gulf states
 - \$10 million total for research and stock assessments
- H.R. 5393 – \$10 million for Gulf stock assessments



Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

- Principal fisheries management and conservation law for federal waters
 - Last reauthorization occurred in 2006
 - Eligible for reauthorization since 2013

Legislative action last Congress

- **H.R. 1335** – Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act (Young, AK)
 - Approved by the House
- **S. 1403** – Florida Fisheries Improvement Act (Rubio, FL; Nelson, FL co-sponsored)
 - Approved by Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
 - Attempted to exempt spiny lobster from ACL requirement



Congressional Bills Relating to Sharks



Prohibit shark feeding in federal waters

- S. 3099 – Access for Sportfishing Act
 - Similar to FWC regulations in state waters and supported by FWC staff

Ban on all possession, sale, and trade of shark fins

- S. 3095 and H.R. 5584 – Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act introduced
 - Not supported by FWC staff
 - Negative impacts to Florida and U.S. commercial fishermen
 - Not likely to reduce finning in less sustainable international fisheries



Recovering America's Wildlife Act

- Bill mirrors a recommendation of *The Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources*
 - Co-chaired by David Freudenthal and John Morris
 - Panel convened to address funding challenges faced by state fish and wildlife agencies, especially non-game species

Legislative Action Last Congress

- **H.R. 5650** – Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2016 (Young, AK; Dingell, MI)
 - Would authorize \$1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program



Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act – H.R. 4818 and S. 2690

- Modernizes Pittman-Robertson
- Gives states more flexibility in how they administer funds
- Allows funding for programs to recruit, retain and reactivate recreational shooters and hunters
- Not passed in 114th Congress; strong FL delegation support for H.R. 4818
- Plan is to reintroduce in early 2017



Sportsmen's Act Update – H.R. 2406 and S. 405

- Exempt sporting equipment (i.e., lead tackle) from regulation under the Toxic Substances Control Act
- Require federal officials to facilitate fishing, hunting, and recreational shooting on certain public lands
- H.R. 2406 would also require the National Park Service and NOAA Fisheries to gain approval from relevant state fish and wildlife agencies before creating areas closed to fishing in National Parks and National Marine Sanctuaries
 - Provision based on Preserving Access to Public Waters Act (H.R. 3310 – Ros-Lehtinen, FL)



State Wildlife Grants Omnibus Appropriations Bill

- The nation's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered
- Annually appropriated
- FY 2016 - \$48.2 million apportioned
- FY 2017- Preliminary apportionment set at \$23.7 million
- Florida's share is ~ \$2 million annually



Next Steps

Staff will continue to advocate FWC's positions

- Meet with Florida Delegation and Congressional staff
- Staff visits to DC to discuss issues important to Florida
- Comment on bills
- Coordinate with stakeholders and other states
- Testify as requested

