



# Lobster Bully Net Fishery

Consent Agenda Item #3 – Final Public Hearing  
February 8, 2017

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**  
Division of Marine Fisheries Management

# General Stakeholder Concerns

- Participation in the commercial bully net sector has increased in recent years
  - May reduce the financial viability of the bully net fishery for individual harvesters
- Potential use of the bully net fishery as a cover for illegal lobster harvest
- Conflicts between waterfront homeowners and bully netters

*Staff received input from stakeholders at Commission meetings, bully net-specific workshops, statewide marine fisheries workshops, and other public meetings*



# Proposed Commercial Bully Net Endorsement

## Options

1. Status quo: harvester must possess an SPL, RS, and crawfish endorsement (C#)
2. Limited-entry bully net endorsement with qualification requirements
3. Open-access bully net endorsement (*staff recommendation*)

## *Stakeholder Input*

- A bully net-specific endorsement is generally supported by commercial fishery
  - Many support a limited-entry endorsement

*Staff recommend creating an open-access, bully net-specific lobster endorsement (option 3)*



# Additional Proposed Management Measures

## Regulatory measures

- Require bully net-specific commercial vessel marking
- Prohibit trap pullers on bully net vessels
- Prohibit the simultaneous possession of a bully net and any underwater breathing apparatus aboard a vessel used to harvest lobster for commercial purposes or to transport lobster for commercial purposes

*Stakeholder input:* Moderate support for the proposed regulatory measures

## Outreach effort

- “Respectful Bully Netting” outreach campaign



# Benefits of Proposed Management Measures

## Open-access bully net endorsement

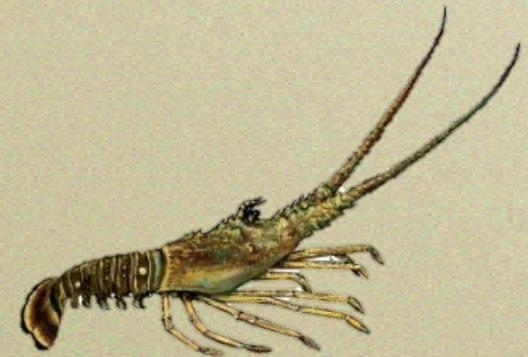
- Continue to allow opportunities for new participants in the commercial lobster fishery
- Obtain better information about fishery participation

## Limit the potential for the bully net fishery to be used as a cover by individuals who are violating existing regulations

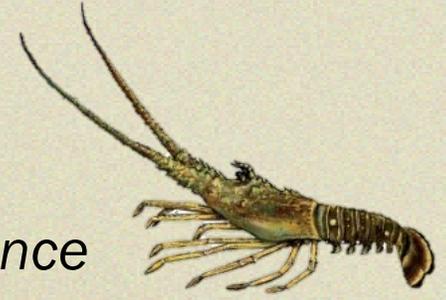
- Prohibit trap pullers on bully net vessels
- Prohibit the simultaneous possession of a bully net and any underwater breathing apparatus aboard a vessel commercially harvesting lobster

## Address waterfront homeowner/fishery participant conflicts

- Require commercial bully net vessels to be marked
- Launch a “Respectful Bully Netting” outreach campaign



# Proposed Final Rules



## 68B-24.002 Definitions

NEW

- Update the definition of “commercial harvester” to include a reference to a bully net-specific commercial endorsement

## 68B-24.0055 Commercial Requirements

NEW

- Create an open-access, bully net-specific commercial endorsement
- Incorporate a reference to the appropriate license application form

## 68B-24.006 Gear: Traps, Buoys, Identification Requirements, Prohibited Devices

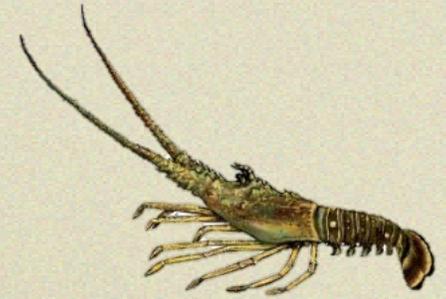
- Require commercial bully net vessels be marked with the harvester’s bully net endorsement number
- Prohibit trap pullers on any vessel required to be marked with a commercial bully net endorsement

## 68B-24.007 Other Prohibitions

- Prohibit the simultaneous possession of a bully net and any underwater breathing apparatus aboard a vessel used in the harvest or transport of lobster for commercial purposes



# Staff Recommendation



## Approve the proposed final rules to

- Create an open-access commercial bully net lobster endorsement
- Require commercial bully net vessels be marked with the harvester's bully net endorsement number
- Prohibit trap pullers on commercial bully net vessels
- Prohibit the simultaneous possession of a bully net and any underwater breathing apparatus aboard a vessel used to harvest or transport lobster for commercial purposes
- Update the definition of “commercial harvester” to include the bully net endorsement



Staff also recommend launching a “Respectful Bully Netting” outreach campaign, and delaying the Final Public Hearing for final approval of previously proposed changes in 68B-4.019, FAC, related to trap pullers and other cleanup measures until the April Commission meeting

*Approve filing the necessary Notice of Change and make the rules effective May 1, 2017*



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



# Background – Bully Net Fishery

- Nighttime operation requiring clear skies and clear, calm water
- Harvest occurs in shallow water, often near to shore
- Primarily executed in the early months of the season
  - Conditions in winter months generally unfavorable
- Relatively minor but viable component of the commercial lobster fishery
  - Financially feasible means of entering commercial fishery
  - Provides lobsters in best condition for live market
- Also popular with recreational fishers
  - Family-friendly alternative to diving for lobster



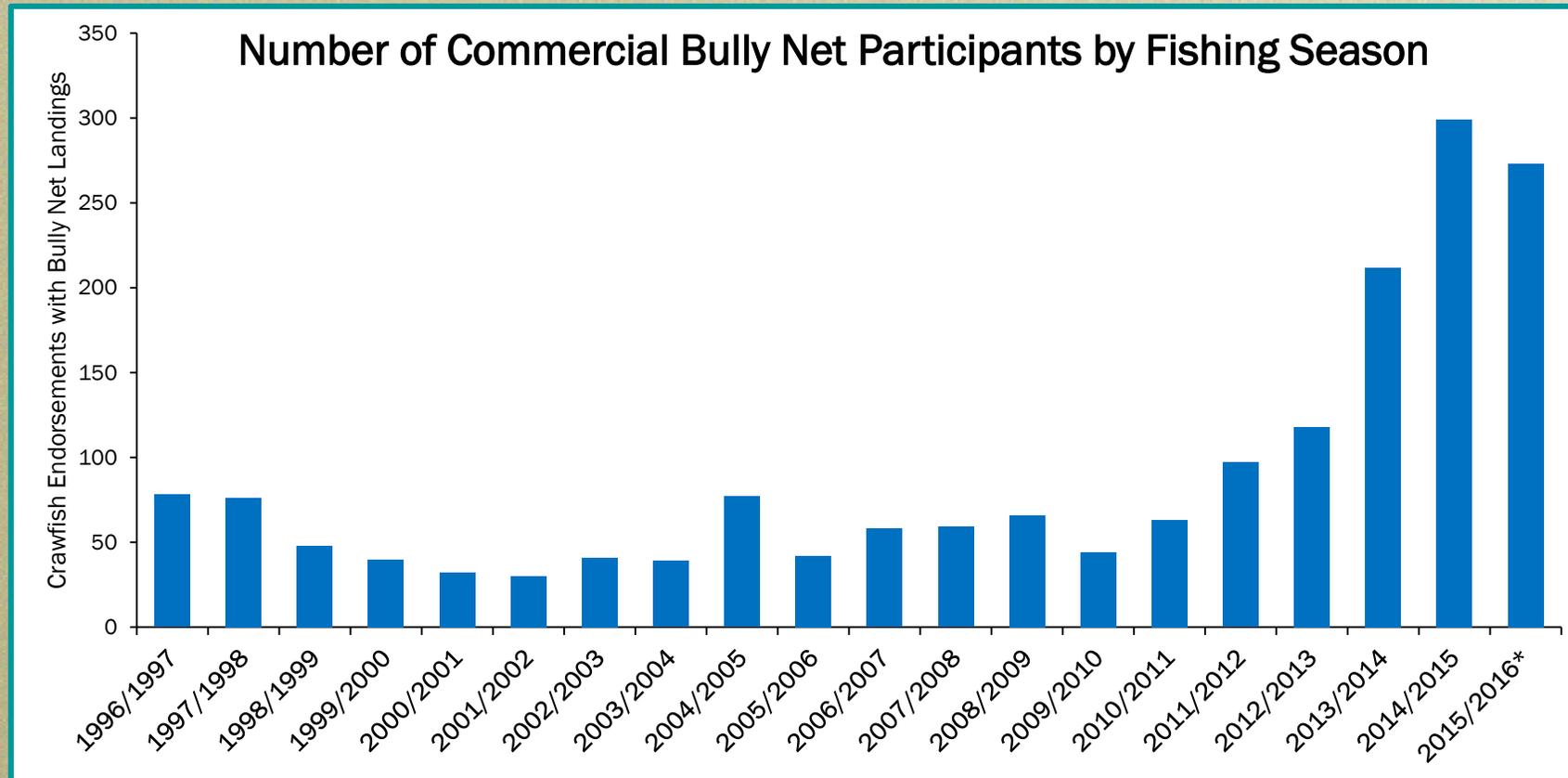
Photo courtesy of Ben Gutzler



# Commercial Bully Net Participation

Reminder: Bully net is the only sector of the commercial lobster fishery that is open-access

- Influx of participants in recent years



\*2015/2016 data are preliminary



# Current Regulations Applicable to Bully Net Fishery

- Minimum size limit: 3 inch carapace length
- Lobster must be landed whole
- Harvest of egg-bearing lobster is prohibited
- Bully nets cannot be larger than 3 feet in diameter

## Commercial

- **License requirements:** SPL, RS, and crawfish endorsement (C#)
- **Season:** Aug. 6 – March 31
- **Daily bag and possession limit:** 250 lobster per person or vessel

## Recreational

- **License requirements:** recreational license and a lobster permit
- **Season:** 2-day sport season and Aug. 6 – March 31
- **Daily bag limit**
  - Sport season: 6 or 12 lobster per person, depending on location
  - Regular season: 6 lobster per person



Photo credit: Mark Yokoyama



# Factors to Consider for Bully Nets

- Self-limiting fishery
- Results in very little bycatch with minimal impact to habitat
- Provides a financially feasible entrance into the commercial lobster fishery
  - Allows opportunities for young and/or new fishers
  - Preserves the culture of participation in the Keys commercial lobster fishery
  - Allows commercial fishers that rely on harvesting a variety of species to include lobster in their diverse fishing portfolio

*Staff recommend pursuing minor changes to management at this time in order to better determine the scope of the fishery and improve enforceability*



# Recent Timeline – Lobster Bully Net Fishery

Nov. 2014: Stakeholders expressed concerns about the bully net fishery at the November Commission meeting

Jan. 2015: Public meeting to hear concerns about conflicts between waterfront homeowners and bully netters

Feb. 2015: Public workshops on management of the commercial bully net fishery

July 2015: Statewide marine fisheries workshops

July/Sept. 2015, Aug. 2016: Staff ride-alongs with bully netters and Law Enforcement

Sept. 2016: Review and discussion of lobster fishery with focus on the bully net fishery

Nov. 2016: Commission approved proposed draft rules

Today: Final public hearing

