



# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Special Commission Meeting  
June 9, 2017  
Conducted by means of Communications Media Technology  
Minutes

\*A digital recording of the entire meeting is available upon request. Please contact the Community Relations Office at (850) 488-4676 for additional information.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held a special meeting June 9, 2017, via telephone and webinar. Chairman Brian Yablonski called the meeting to order with the following members in attendance:

Ronald Bergeron, Fort Lauderdale  
Michael Sole, Tequesta  
Bo Rivard, Panama City

Aliese Priddy, Immokalee  
Robert Spottswood, Key West  
Richard Hanas, Oviedo

Senior and Presenting Staff:

Nick Wiley	Executive Director
Eric Sutton	Assistant Executive Director
Jennifer Fitzwater	Chief of Staff
Emily Norton	Deputy General Counsel
Jessica McCawley	Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Gil McRae	Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
Susan Smith	Director, Community Relations

There were 15 individuals registered to speak to the Commission during this special meeting.

### **Meeting Opening**

Chairman Yablonski called the June 9, 2017, special meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

He provided background on the topic of this meeting and the goal.

### **Roll Call**

Chairman Yablonski conducted a roll call to check that all the Commissioners were dialed in to the meeting.

Vice Chairman Priddy- Present  
Commissioner Bergeron- Present  
Commissioner Rivard- Present  
Commissioner Sole- Present  
Commissioner Hanas- Present  
Commissioner Spottswood- Present

### **Administrative Matters**

Chairman Yablonski provided general information to all those participating via telephone. He noted the process for this meeting regarding the presentation, public comment, and Commissioner discussion.

### **Review and Discussion – Red Snapper Season**

Chairman Yablonski asked Executive Director Wiley to open the discussion on this topic and coordinate with Ms. Jessica McCawley, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, to present the details to the Commission.

Executive Director Wiley thanked Chairman Yablonski for the introduction. He thanked staff and the public for participating in today's meeting. Due to the nature of this topic and the quick decision that needs to be made on this, the goal is to get input from the Commission so that he can execute an Executive Order for Red Snapper Season with alternate dates based on additional coordination with the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and other Gulf States. He thanked Ms. McCawley and her staff for pulling together the information for today's meeting.

Chairman Yablonski noted appreciation for the U.S. DOC and their willingness to work with the states on options for increased opportunity.

Ms. McCawley presented details associated with an opportunity to increase fishing days in federal waters during the summer of 2017. She added that this opportunity would be a gain in federal water weekend season days in exchange for some state water weekdays. She presented the current structure of the 2017 season and two possible season frameworks currently under review by the U.S. DOC. She noted the next steps of working with U.S. DOC to negotiate the best outcome to provide as many sustainable fishing opportunities as possible. Finally, she provided a summary of stakeholder comments that were submitted through the MyFWC website regarding this topic.

### **Initial Commissioner Discussion**

Chairman Yablonski called on Commissioners for their initial questions or comments.

Chairman Yablonski asked about a general number of state days that may need to be exchanged to get the additional federal season days.

Executive Director Wiley responded that the general number of state days would be approximately 13 state days to 34 days depending on how many federal days we are looking to get.

Commissioner Spottswood asked for clarification on the numbers and options moving forward.

Executive Director Wiley responded that the current fall season has 28 days including Labor Day if no changes are made. He explained that if we implemented a new deal in June, Florida would have to give up the remaining weekday season in June and first week of July. He noted that the numbers can vary depending on whether or not the option chosen gives up Fridays.

Commissioner Rivard thanked Ms. McCawley and Executive Director Wiley for working with U.S. DOC to negotiate a better opportunity for all anglers in the Gulf of Mexico. His interactions with anglers in the panhandle indicate they are supportive of this action because of the increase in the fishing areas that provide positive, sustainable fishing opportunities for this species. He added his support for Executive Director Wiley to move forward with this process.

Vice Chairman Priddy stated that she will reserve her comments until after the public comment.

Commissioner Bergeron commented on the excellent job by Executive Director Wiley and Ms. McCawley. He also noted that stakeholders are supportive of this potential action by the Commission.

Commissioner Hanas thanked all the parties involved in the discussion to increase the opportunity for anglers.

Commissioner Sole echoed the comments thanking all parties involved in this. He asked about the difference between a 27-day season compared to the 39-day season framework. His understanding is that the 27-day federal season would not require surrendering as many state water season dates.

Chairman Yablonski confirmed that this is correct.

Commissioner Spottswood echoed the comments thanking Executive Director Wiley and staff for working on this.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Gary Jennings with the American Sportfishing Association and the Keep Florida Fishing Initiative, addressed the Commission. He thanked FWC for their efforts to work on this potential opportunity. While they are appreciative of either season option, they recognize that this is an interim response and not a long-term solution to the fishery management system, which is not appropriately addressing the needs of the recreational sector.

Mr. Eric Thorn addressed the Commission with thanks to the Commission for addressing this issue. He requested a harmonized season between federal and state waters to eliminate confusion for anglers. He suggested in the future that all of the Gulf states create a harmonized season in both federal and state waters.

Ms. Pam Anderson with Captain Anderson's Marina in Panama City addressed the Commission. She noted that if the annual catch limit is overfished, there will be days taken away next year unless something changes at the Gulf Council. She noted support for the action moving forward, but wanted everyone to be aware of the quotas and make sure that extending the season this year does not harm anglers next year. She also noted the significant economic loss over the past nine years due to shortened federal seasons for both the for-hire and private recreational sector.

Mr. Dave Eggeman addressed the Commission in support of option #1 (27-day federal option), which allows for a fall season.

Mr. Tom Putnam of Half Hitch Tackle in Panama City addressed the Commission with thanks for working to provide additional opportunities. He noted concerns for accountability measures at the Council level and negative impacts to the for-hire fleet. He added support for the 27-day option to see how the change impacts things on every level and to try to keep the fall season since it is economically important to many businesses.

Mr. Michel Moburg addressed the Commission with thanks for working with the U.S. DOC to provide this new opportunity. He addressed the Commission in support of equalizing the opportunities for all Florida residents, including those in Southwest Florida, who fish for this species in the Gulf of Mexico federal waters.

Mr. Bill George addressed the Commission in support of adding additional federal days. He noted that it is important to keep in mind that not everyone is a weekend angler and requested some options for non-weekend days.

Mr. Dennis O'Hern, Executive Director of Fishing Rights Alliance, addressed the Commission in support of red snapper fishing opportunities and the option for a 39-day season. He stated that the 39-day season will have a large economic impact and enhance fishing opportunities for Florida anglers. He also expressed concern about possible overages and backlash on the recreational fishery.

Mr. James White addressed the Commission in support of the proposal to increase federal season days which would help those anglers in Southwest Florida. He supported the 39-day season which will be equitable and provide more opportunities for Southwest Florida anglers.

Mr. Eric Brazier, Deputy Director of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance, addressed the Commission in full support of this action.

Mr. Chris Duca addressed the Commission with thanks for considering these options. He addressed the Commission in support of more fishing opportunities in Southwest Florida through the Keys to make fishing opportunities more equitable.

Mr. Reed Miller addressed the Commission in support for season framework #2 (39-day federal option) as presented today. As a large fishing and tackle manufacturer, these additional federal days would bolster employment opportunities and boost local economies. He noted that improvement is needed for red snapper life history science and fishery management.

Mr. Fred Dalsey addressed the Commission in support of either proposal but noted bigger support for the 39-day season for the economic benefit to the State of Florida.

Mr. Greg Taylor addressed the Commission in support of adding federal season days for those in Southwest Florida and making the season more equitable for all Florida anglers.

Mr. Chris Green addressed the Commission in support of expansion of federal season days. He noted that not all state waters of the Gulf are equal and certain regions can only catch red snapper in federal waters.

#### Final Commissioner Discussion

Chairman Yablonski asked Executive Director Wiley and each Commissioner for their final comments.

Executive Director Wiley noted concern for next year's quota, but emphasized that the upcoming scheduled stock assessment should provide information about higher populations of Gulf red snapper. He also noted that this is a good opportunity for the 2017 season and that FWC will continue to work hard to provide more opportunities in the future.

Commissioner Rivard thanked everyone for the hard work moving this forward and noted full support for coming up with an answer that works best for everyone.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked staff, federal partners, and stakeholders again for their efforts on this. He noted that those stakeholders in Southwest Florida will have a much better opportunity.

Commissioner Hanas agreed with the previous Commissioner comments. He noted support for staff to pursue this action and moving forward with increased fishing opportunity for this species. He also thanked Executive Director Wiley and FWC staff for working on these season options.

Commissioner Spottswood noted full support for FWC moving forward with actions to increase the opportunities for anglers. He thanked the stakeholders from all perspectives of this fishery for working in a positive manner to come up with a better opportunity.

Commissioner Sole noted that this is a great opportunity regardless of which option moves forward.

Vice Chairman Priddy commented that this is such a wonderful opportunity and she hopes that this will be the beginning of a strong partnership with the U.S. DOC to look at other potential actions that can improve federal fisheries. She noted that any opportunities to provide more fishing days is a benefit to Florida anglers.

Chairman Yablonski thanked the Commissioners for making themselves available to speak with staff and participating in today's meeting. He also thanked the stakeholders for their interest in this. He commented that his suggestion would be to move forward with as many federal season days as possible because they are better during the summer portion of the year than some of the fall season days based on weather and other impacts. He noted that this is not only beneficial to Florida anglers, but the entire Gulf coast. He asked Executive Director Wiley if he had the input necessary.

Executive Director Wiley responded that this input is great and gives exactly what is needed to move forward with negotiations. He thanked the other Gulf States who are willing to come to the table with the U.S. DOC to talk about the issue and options to move forward in a positive light for anglers. He commented that by the end of next week, there should be additional information from the other states and the U.S. DOC decision.

Chairman Yablonski noted that the communication on any decision related to this topic will be sent out via all avenues available to the agency.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Yablonski adjourned the meeting at 3:13 p.m.

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Brian Yablonski  
Chairman

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Nick Wiley  
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

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Lisa Zullo  
Commission Assistant