



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting
May 2-3, 2012
Crystal River, FL

Minutes

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held their regular meeting May 2-3, 2012, at the Plantation Inn, located at 9301 West Fort Island Trail, Crystal River, FL.

Chairman Kathy Barco called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following members in attendance.

Kenneth Wright, Vice Chairman, Orlando
Richard A. Corbett, Tampa

Ronald A. Bergeron, Ft. Lauderdale
Aliese Priddy, Immokalee, FL

Chuck Roberts, Tallahassee

Staff:

Nick Wiley	Executive Director
Greg Holder	Assistant Executive Director
Bud Vielhauer	General Counsel
Colonel Jim Brown	Director, Division of Law Enforcement
Chuck Collins	Director, South Region
Louie Roberson	Director, Northwest Region
Dennis David	Director, Northeast Region
Roland Garcia	Director, North Central Region
Chris Wynn	Director, Southwest Region
Eric Sutton	Director, Habitat and Species Conservation
Diane Eggeman	Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management
Tom Champeau	Director, Division of Fresh Fish Management
Gil McRae	Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
Jessica McCawley	Director, Division of Marine Fisheries
Doc Kokol	Director of Community Relations
Martha Bademan	Environmental Specialist III, Division of Marine Fisheries
Don Coyner	Section Leader, Division of Hunting and Game Management
Kipp Frohlich	Section Leader, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Jackie Fauls	Legislative Affairs Director
Charlotte Jerrett	Chief Financial Officer
Major Jack Daugherty	Division of Law Enforcement
Rae Waddell	Director, Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network

There were 71 individuals registered to speak to the Commission during the two-day meeting.

Meeting Opening

Chairman Barco called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and welcomed the Commissioners, staff, and public to The Plantation Inn at Crystal River.

She invited Tom Champeau, FWC's Director of the Freshwater Fishery Division to give the invocation, followed by Vice Chairman Wright, who led us in the pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Recognitions

Florida Guides Association Annual Recognition Award

Chairman Barco introduced Bill Kelly, Executive Director of the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association, and asked him to present the Florida Guides Association Annual Recognition Awards. Mr. Kelly announced that this year the award was given to Ms. Jackie Fauls as a representative for the many staff involved for their hard work in getting important legislation passed for stiffer fines for lobster trap robbing. Ms. Fauls thanked the whole team for their extraordinary efforts. Several Commissioners thanked Ms. Fauls and a photo was taken with the Commissioners.

Trained Eyes Coastwatcher Officer of the Year Award

Chairman Barco then asked Captain Pat Kelly to present the "Trained Eyes Coastwatcher" Officer of the Year Award. Captain Kelly announced that this year the recipient of the award is Officer Randall Hart. Officer Hart was chosen for his dedication, hard work, and exemplary work ethic. He then briefly described the award and explained why Officer Hart deserved this award. A photo was taken with the Commissioners.

Captain Phil Chapman Conservation Award

Chairman Barco asked Captain Pat Kelly to continue with the presentation of the Captain Phil Chapman Conservation Award. He announced that this year's award recipient is Dr. Robert Muller, PHD and that he was chosen for his dedication and hard work with snook assessments. Dr. Muller was presented with the plaque and then spoke a few words to thank the Commission. A photo was taken with the Commissioners.

Introductions of Commission Employees

Retirement

Chairman Barco asked Executive Director Wiley to introduce retiree Chuck McKelvy. Mr. Wiley talked about Mr. McKelvy's dedicated and loyal 35 years of service with the Agency. He reviewed his history of work accomplishments throughout his career. Mr. McKelvy spoke a few words, several Commissioners thanked him for his dedication, and a photo was taken with the Commissioners.

Chairman Barco recognized and introduced Nicholas Abrahams, Aide to Senator Charles S. Dean, Sr.

Charlotte Jerrett

Executive Director Wiley introduced Charlotte Jerrett as the newest Senior Leadership Team Member and our new CFO. He briefly described her experience and accomplishments, which she brings to the Agency.

Nick introduced Major Roy Brown, who will be retiring in June after being with the agency for over 30 years.

Executive Director Wiley continued with the introduction of the following local Commission employees:

- Laura Simpson
- Robby Creech
- Kent Williges
- Ryan Butryn
- Karl Miller
- Shane Walker
- Robbie Lovestrand

Adoption of Minutes

Chairman Barco asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 7-9, 2012, Commission meeting minutes. Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Wright and seconded by Commissioner Corbett, the minutes were approved.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bergeron to approve the Agenda, and seconded by Commissioner Roberts, the motion passed.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Chairman Barco asked Greg Holder, Assistant Executive Director, to present the items listed on the Consent Agenda. Mr. Holder summarized the four (4) proposed issues listed on the Consent Agenda for May 2-3, 2012.

- Roundscale spearfish (final rule): To remove the roundscale spearfish from the prohibited list, add it to the marlin and sailfish one fish recreational bag and possession limit, include in the possession limit exceptions, and create a size limit of 66" LIFL, effective July 1, 2012.
- Reef Fish Multi-day Possession Limit (draft rule): Update the Exception paragraph of 68B-14.0036 to reflect numbering changes previously made in the reef fish recreational bag limits rule, but not include red porgy harvested from the Atlantic Ocean in the Exception paragraph, effective July 1, 2012.
- Spiny Lobster Trap Certificates (draft rule): The purpose is to update 68E-18, F.A.C., to make it consistent with provision of 379.3671, F.S., effective July 1, 2012.
- Draft Rules relating to hunting: The proposed rule amendment would allow the open season for the taking of gray squirrels to begin 28 or 35 days earlier depending on calendar year and maintain a comparable ending date.

Upon a motion of Commissioner Priddy and seconded by Commissioner Roberts, the motion carried and the Commission approved the May 2, Consent Agenda.

Executive Director's Report

Chairman Barco asked Mr. Wiley to present the Executive Director's report.

Director Wiley discussed Vice Chairman Wright's trip to DC to testify about the Biscayne Bay National Park at the Congressional hearing in support of maintaining fishing access. Vice Chairman Wright spoke about his experience; he questioned what value is the resource if access is denied. We are looking at our ability to continue to work with the park system and to look at tools we have to help manage the park and continue to provide sustainable access and even enhance the park. The Commissioners emphasized how important it is to represent the people of Florida and have the message delivered in person. Vice Chairman Wright thanked Ms. McCawley for her efforts to supply the knowledge and information he needed for his presentation.

Law Enforcement Reaccreditation - Director Wiley announced that on February 23, the Division was officially recognized for achieving reaccredited status. He explained that to achieve this, the agency had to comply with approximately 213 standards. He stated that Colonel Brown and his team did an exceptional job on this process. Director Wiley further stated, this is a highly prized recognition of law enforcement professional excellence. This great honor validates the hard work they put into serving the residents and visitors of Florida, in addition to the critical role they play in the conservation of Florida's precious fish and wildlife.

Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition - Director Wiley detailed the Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition and explained that the team's journey highlighted the importance of connectivity of both public and private lands to support the state's wildlife, particularly the Florida panther and black bear. He added that on February 1, Commissioner Priddy joined the Expedition at her ranch and talked of the historic culture of Florida cattle ranchers conserving wildlife and habitat. Director Wiley added that many FWC staff participated in the Expedition; FWC panther biologist Darrell Land also joined with Commissioner Priddy to discuss panther management. Commissioner Bergeron added that it was fabulous after their visit to Commissioner Priddy's land, he was able to ride several miles on horseback to connect with them because they had gotten off course; they were very happy to see the horses that he brought them to ride back on. Commissioner Bergeron, at a separate event on February 4, shared his knowledge of Everglade's history, wildlife and hunting traditions. Southwest Region Director Chris Wynn spent several days hiking and camping with the team and DSC Deputy Director Thomas Eason joined the Expedition at Archbold Biological Station to talk about FWC's Cooperative Conservation Blueprint, the draft Florida black bear management plan, and participated in panel discussions. On April 9, a number of FWC staff met the Expedition team as it reached Camp Blanding Military Reservation to highlight the importance of military bases to wildlife habitat corridors and connections. Chairman Barco said they accomplished their mission in completing the trek and Commissioner Priddy emphasized that they succeeded in highlighting connectivity throughout the state.

Southeast Deer Study Group - Director Wiley reported that FWC hosted the 35th annual meeting of the Southeast Deer Study Group in Sandestin, Florida on February 26-28. This is hosted on a rotating basis by each southeastern state wildlife agency's deer management section, and provides a venue for presenting their most recent findings on deer biology and management. The theme this year was "Shifting Paradigms" and provided a great learning opportunity about deer biology and management, especially in regards to the predator role in the management of deer in the Southeast. He thanked the staff involved who helped make our agency shine.

Lake Iamonia clean up. Director Wiley explained that Officer Bucky Higman and Freshwater Fisheries biologist Katie Woodside in collaboration with Leon County Parks and Recreation, and 20 FSU students, were able to remove more than 2,500 pounds of litter from the lake.

License System Conversion. Director Wiley announced that we are still moving forward with a new License System Conversion of the recreational hunting and fishing licensing system from the Total Licensing System (TLS) to the Recreational License Issuance Services (RLIS) scheduled to take place October 1, 2012. Director Wiley emphasized that staff in cooperation with the new vendor has worked hard to ensure a smooth transition.

Deepwater Horizon. Director Wiley explained that on April 18, 2012 the state and federal Trustees and BP announced approval of the Phase I Early Restoration Plan, which presents eight projects in four Gulf States, intended to expedite restoration while the full assessment and restoration planning process continues. Mr. McRae and Dr. Elsa Hubble and several staff members have been particularly involved in getting a hatchery proposal on the table. The two Florida projects, boat ramp enhancements in Escambia County and dune restoration on Pensacola Beach will help to restore recreational and ecological losses caused by the spill. He stated that just two years out, to have these projects approved is a major accomplishment.

Cowbone Marsh. Director Wiley explained that Cowbone Marsh, which is essentially an impenetrable buttonbush marsh, has been managed by FWC for 15 years. This came out of a lawsuit that determined that Fisheating Creek was a navigable water body and thus sovereignty submerged lands. Under terms of the

agreement, FWC agreed to maintain the historic channel. While trying to open a channel through Cowbone Marsh, we brought in a machine called an “agitator”, a machine that chops up floating vegetation mats, and opened up the area. State and federal permitting agencies felt we were in violation for dredging. We are now working with federal agencies, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District to remedy this by back filling with clean sand. However, Earthjustice, representing Save Our Creeks, Inc has filed two legal actions against FWC in an attempt to stop the corrective actions. He pointed out that if there were any questions, Mr. Vielhauer could address them. Commissioner Bergeron questioned if this channel connects Fisheating Creek to Lake Okeechobee. Director Wiley responded that it did.

Good Samaritan. Director Wiley described how Commissioner Roberts, through his actions on Tuesday morning, April 24 not only helped senior fisheries technician Bill Arnold, with the Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management out of a tough situation, but also was responsible for saving thousands of fish produced at the Blackwater Hatchery.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Chairman Barco asked Martha Bademan, with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, to review the issues that were discussed at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) during their April 2012 meeting in Corpus Christi, TX. Ms. Bademan reviewed the issues addressed during the meeting that included amberjack final action and approval of an interim rule and long-term options under consideration for gray triggerfish. In addition, she reviewed possible changes the Council will consider for grouper recreational seasons for 2013, accountability measures, and allocation. She also reviewed other Council items that included expansion of the commercial reef fish IFQ program, designation of artificial reefs as essential fish habitat, possible changes to regulations regarding venting tools and recompression devices, mackerel wholesale dealer reporting requirements, and sector separation. She said that staff requests Commission direction on possible long-term management measures for gray triggerfish, including establishing a bag limit and closed season for the recreational sector, increasing the minimum size limits for recreational and commercial harvest, and setting a commercial trip limit. Staff also welcomed any input on Council items from the Commission. The next Council meeting will be held June 18-22 in Tampa, FL.

Public Comment

James Zurbrick, (Commercial Fisherman, Steinhatchee) commented that amberjack ties in with the quota system for snapper/grouper. The 2000-pound limit will benefit him. The quota is all caught in January and February. The producers will go out of business because they cannot make it on 2000 pounds of amberjack, as this fish sells for \$1.50 -\$2.00 per pound dockside. He believes amberjack needs a quota share program. He added that triggerfish is in trouble; they are all small fish. Fourteen inches is a nice triggerfish, but he does not see sixteen inch ones so he did not know what that would do to recreational catch. They are proud of the IFQ system and fishers who received shares are really managers.

Captain Mike Eller (Destin Charter Boat Assoc.) stated that gray triggerfish is in trouble; he is not seeing bigger fish. A smaller bag limit of 1-2 per person would be OK with him. He is happy about the greater amberjack regulations and believes they are working in the Gulf, though they are not crazy about the June - July closure. He also feels that the IFQ system makes kings of some and paupers of others. He is very resistant to pushing the Vermillion snapper and other species into an IFQ system; he does not want more fish pushed into the IFQ system until more kinks are worked out, such as planning for younger generations to join the system and community quotas.

Scott Childress (Commercial Spearfisherman - Odessa) commented that he has only caught five commercial amberjack this year; he feels that a 2000-pound trip limit is a good idea and an IFQ system would work for this fish. He also feels that triggerfish are in trouble, he has not seen one fourteen inch in size. He would also prefer to NOT have a closed season and go to a bag or trip limit instead of larger size limit; we need to rebuild the fishery.

Commercially do whatever it takes with a bag limit or trip limit. Finally, he commented that IFQ's are good for helping to re-build the fishery faster and allows him to fish all year and make a living.

Jason Delacruz (Gulf of Mexico Reef fish Shareholder's Alliance) commented that he appreciates that the Commissioners have always been flexible when making the hard decisions when considering building fisheries. He hopes that you continue looking at sector separation, as it may be a good solution for charter for hire and headboats. To continue to be able to take the public fishing needs to be protected.

Pam Anderson (Panama City Boatman's Association) commented that the Gulf Council continues to try to reduce fishing in the Gulf. They are finding triggerfish eggs and juveniles in stomachs of red snapper. If vermilion snapper goes to the IFQ system there will be winners and losers; she questions why there has to be winners and losers; the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires economic and social considerations. We need to stop micromanaging and start growing habitat, which would help many fisheries. One idea would be to not remove oil-drilling platforms that are no longer active, or add more artificial reefs. She urged the Agency to enhance fisheries with BP funds. She ended with a quote from Vice Chairman Wright "What value is a resource if access is denied?"

TJ Marshall (Ocean Conservancy – Cocoa Beach) commented that the Council discussion on the headboat Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) was the Council providing input on the NMFS action. The concept was to allow a group of fishers to spread out their historical catches over a longer period of time, with no increase in pounds; this will provide good controls and good information. He feels that gray triggerfish will need some kind of closed season. People will come to Florida at certain times of year to fish world-class fish; as in Tarpon fishing or Osceola turkey hunting, he suggested staggering the fishing so there is participation. He asked the Commission to give direction to Ms. McCawley to continue discussion with the Gulf Council on sector separation, which will provide strong accountability measures and tracking, and allows for stability for business plans for those fishers. He commented that the charter-for-hire industry provides public access to the fishery.

Jeff Miller (Coastal Conservation Assoc. - Florida) is adamantly opposed to any type of sector separation as it pits recreational anglers against charter/for-hire fishers. He requested that the Commission stand firm and join them in opposing this issue. He also asked the Commission to oppose the pilot program for headboats, letting different segments fish in closed seasons continues to upset the public. The exempted permit for "pilot for hire" pits us against each other; would we do that to deer hunters?

Chairman Barco asked Dr. Roy Crabtree to address comments. He agreed that there are tough issues with gray triggerfish, bag limits and sector separation, even the charterboat fleet is divided on the issues. The Council will continue to look for testimony, he feels that folks do not fully understand it yet; the for-hire sector is different from recreational folks with different needs. The headboat cooperative project will go out for public comment. We are looking at different ways to approach problems and think outside the box.

No Commission Discussion

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Chairman Barco asked Jessica McCawley, Director of the Marine Fisheries Management Division, to provide an update of the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (Council) issues. Ms. McCawley presented a review of the South Atlantic Council issues from the March 5-9, 2012 Council meeting in Savannah, GA, which included: spiny lobster, the black sea bass emergency rule, golden tilefish, mackerel, cobia, shrimp closed areas off east Florida, closed areas for Warsaw grouper, speckled hind, golden crab and the wreckfish ITQ program. She also talked about data collection and a review of annual catch limits. Further, she discussed those items delayed until at least 2013 and the delay of the red snapper South Atlantic benchmark assessment. There was no Commission direction requested at this time; however, staff welcomed any input on Council items as discussed. The next Council meeting is June 11-15 2012, in Orlando, FL.

Public Comment

Jerry Sansom (Organized Fishermen of Florida – Cocoa Beach) wanted to express appreciation to Commission staff for continuing to work with the shrimp industry on the pending deepwater closures. He further stated he is against spiny lobster trap line marking; they want to deal with the issue, but marking is not the answer. He wants to understand how the marking will minimize interactions. He stated that we need to overcome this before the 2017 deadline; it is not necessary and useless.

Vice Chairman Wright thought the Commission's previous discussion about line marking was that it would not generate additional information. Ms. McCawley responded that we voted for a no action alternative for both Councils for no additional marking of lines at this time. The purpose of line marking is to trace back to a fishery if the lines break free and entangles an animal or damages corals. The fishery cannot be easily identified if line that breaks free from the trap without the lines buoy or trap tag. Vice Chairman Wright asked; once you know what fishery what do you do about it? Ms. McCawley responded that the connection seems to go back to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Dr. Crabtree clarified that this goes back to ESA and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Federal approach with traps is to separate the fisheries. Often the line breaks loose and entanglements occur, but only a portion of the line is remaining, so there is no way to determine which fishery the line is from. The Biological Opinion (BO) for each fishery allows a certain amount of "incidental take"; it is very difficult to allow take without more definition of the amount of interaction between the fishery and endangered species. The rule is now in a biological opinion, not in rule. They hope to phase in line marking requirements over time so that as fishermen replace worn out rope, they can replace it with marked rope. They are talking to fishermen to find a way to do this and avoid economical impact; they have until 2017 to find a solution.

Bill Kelly (Executive Director, Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Assoc.) agreed with Mr. Sansom's comments that there are very few entanglements. Trap rope marking is an issue to them. He emphasized that so far ten turtles have been entangled, eight were released alive and two died, but they were not sure if it was trap rope or not, as there are many different uses of the rope. He reported that in addition, there have been two small sawfish entanglements over six years, both were released alive; as well as nine square feet of coral have been hurt by line. He explained that there is 8,267 miles of rope in the industry. They will continue working with FWRI on the trap line-marking program in hopes to discover a good method that will not burden the fishermen financially or be too big of a workload. There has been a trapline-marking program in New England and in two or three years since implementation, no marked ropes have been identified. He also commented on the 240-foot closure, that speckled hind and Warsaw grouper are not listed as threatened or endangered. Finally, he commented that four of the eleven permit holders do not want catch shares for the golden crab fishery. All the fishers together have not ever caught even half the current quota; we should be encouraging people to go out and fish for golden crab and make a living. He reported to the Commission that there is disagreement amongst the fishers about it.

No Commission Discussion

Recreational Red Snapper Season - Gulf of Mexico

Chairman Barco asked Gil McRae, Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, to present a review of red snapper life history including age classes and population structure. Mr. McRae provided the Commission with a history of the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery, which includes a long pattern of overfishing. In addition, he discussed the long-term nature of the Gulf red snapper rebuilding schedule and progress made. He further discussed the importance of older fish, size, age and reproductive value. Mr. McRae then explained the progress made in rebuilding the stock and age structure, how the SPR is steadily increasing as well as the average fish weight. Last, he discussed how the spawning stock off Florida is being restored, how the recreational total allowable catch (TAC), is progressively increasing, the role of artificial reefs and the SEDAR benchmark assessment is scheduled to start in August of 2012.

Commissioner Priddy asked if the bottom graph represented a projection or an ideal situation. Mr. McRae responded that it is a goal. This is the target for rebuilding the older age class.

Commissioner Corbett questioned if the two spawning areas shown on the map are in state or federal waters. Mr. McRae responded these are mostly in federal waters.

Commissioner Corbett asked if there is any way to get information earlier than 2013. Mr. McRae responded that we need three more years of data before we re-do a benchmark assessment. He explained that SEDAR is a joint effort by the feds and all Gulf States, administered by the Councils.

Ms. McCawley continued with a summary of a proposed rule to adopt federal standards for Gulf of Mexico red snapper. This action would make state recreational red snapper regulations in the Gulf of Mexico consistent with federal action that is expected to set the 2012 recreational red snapper season to June 1 through July 10 (40 days). She continued a discussion on recent Gulf Council Actions. She addressed two actions needed today. Action 1 is for the state to consider adopting the federal season of 40 days; or action 2 would consider an alternative season if the federal season is shortened, either use the 2011 season of 48 days or use an executive order to specify a different season. Staff recommendations were to approve the proposed rule amendment for Gulf of Mexico red snapper so that the state recreational harvest season will be June 1 through July 10. If approved, the rule would be noticed and filed without further hearing as allowed under the adopting federal standards provision of Florida Statutes. For Action 2, if the federal season is shortened, staff recommends staying with a 40-day state waters season via an executive order.

Finally, NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator, Dr. Roy Crabtree presented a brief report on issues raised in the past about federal management strategy for this fishery. He said that staff did a great job with the presentations and that he is here to answer any questions. He stated we are required to have these quotas and that we have to count the catch and close the fishery when the quota is hit.

Chairman Barco asked how bigger fish equal a shorter season and how does that cycle change to a bigger season? Dr. Crabtree responded that he could not say exactly, but we could see a longer season next year if we did not have an overrun again. Shortening the season is intended to reduce the catch, but when all the people come to fish during the shortened season, we do not get the reduction desired. He explained that the stock is recovering rapidly and as we get closer things will become more stable and catch rates more predictable. We started at nine million pounds, we went down to five million pounds, and now it is going back up to about eight million pounds. In a few years, we expect to be at 14 million pounds. He detailed that we are now at a two-fish bag limit, with most catching their bag limit. We could go to a one-fish bag limit and have a longer season. He stated that so far people have not wanted to do that. The Council will tackle the allocation issue as well. Currently, the allocations are 49 percent recreational and 51 percent commercial; this could be changed too. However, over the next couple of years as things stabilize, we should start to see longer seasons.

Chairman Barco stated that from a research standpoint, much of Washington sees Florida as a boutique fishery. Other states get much more money for stock assessments and have stock assessments every year. She asked what we could do to get more emphasis on the southeast, since we live off the rules made from stock assessments, and we currently have to wait for three or more years until a new stock assessment comes out. She asked what could we do, work through our legislators? She stated that the good thing that came out of the BP oil spill was to show how important our fisheries are to the economics of Florida. Dr. Crabtree responded that we need to keep making the argument about how important fishing is in the southeast, with the largest recreational fishing in the country. Recreational fishing has a huge economic impact. We also need to reach out to our Congressional delegation in Florida. The view of recreational fishing for fun does not get the right message of the economic benefits of recreational fishing to Florida. We also have more difficulty in assessing our stocks, with different habitats, many different fisheries, techniques, etc. We need more innovative ways to look at these stocks and we need to show that it is worth the effort. The trends for budget are not good either and the competition for stock assessment money will get more severe.

Chairman Barco asked Dr. Crabtree if they looked at new ways to get data, like using smart phones for fisheries dependent data. Can we use the technology that is out there in a more economical and efficient way. Dr. Crabtree replied that there are test projects out there now with electronic logbooks in which fishermen record their catch on

ipads or iphones. There are also electronic logbooks used in the shrimp industry, you can see where and how long they are dragging. We have VMS on Commercial reef fish vessels. There are many things going on, and that is the direction we are moving.

Commissioner Corbett asked why do we see such a dramatic drop in red snapper stocks through the 1960's and 70's; was no one was thinking conservation then? Dr. Crabtree explained that the councils were created in 1976, because foreign fishers were catching many fish close to our shores, before we extended our zone out to 200 miles. We did not have a management system in place until 1976. The Florida Marine Fisheries Commission was started in 1984. He is optimistic that we are ahead of our projections and the red snapper fishery will be rebuilt before 2030, but we have to go through the assessment process to find out.

Commissioner Priddy asked what possible repercussions could happen from Action 2, and would it affect the total fish that can be caught for 2013? Ms. McCawley explained that what the Regional Administrator is trying to do is to keep the fishery from exceeding the annual catch limit (ACL). If states go inconsistent with the season set in federal waters, what they have to look at is what effect it would have on the federal season and then back it up and do a new projection on when the new ACL will be met.

Vice Chairman Wright asked if we take Action 1 and go consistent, what would happen if Louisiana does something different and does not go consistent. Why wouldn't we say 40 days and authorize the Chairman and Director to match that so we can stay consistent. Ms. McCawley responded that we can do that but would have to consider the possibility of having a very short or no season if the federal season is shortened or eliminated.

Director Wiley commented that when the Commission is ready to provide direction, we would like to have some parameters for setting the season; we do want to have a comfort zone.

Chairman Barco asked Dr. Crabtree to clarify what effect Texas will have on the season for not being consistent and why. Dr. Crabtree responded that Texas has not changed their state regulations since 1999 or 2000. Less than 10 percent of red snapper is caught in Texas waters and much of that is caught by headboats under federal permits and has to follow federal rules. This costs everyone a few fishing days. If they would put in place compatible regulations, the season probably would be longer by a few days. The probability of an overrun would be less. There are very few snappers caught in the state waters off Texas, also very few caught in LA waters (they only go out 3 miles). The experience in Florida is when we were inconsistent, it showed a very high shift in landings; Florida has the largest catches.

Chairman Barco recognized and welcomed Melissa Thompson, Congressman Southerland's staff. She also welcomed Kevin Kelly.

Public Comment

Randy Boggs (Reef Surprise Charters – Orange Beach, AL) urged the Commission to stay compatible; it will benefit the most people in the Gulf. If you do not go consistent, it could almost put a complete closure to snapper in the EEZ because all of the quota will be caught in Florida state waters. Indirect catch of red snapper while fishing for other species like vermilion snapper will further exceed the quota and could result in a complete shut down like in the South Atlantic EEZ.

Mike Colby (Clearwater Commercial Marine Assoc. - Clearwater) stated this snapper issue has two of the same components as with gag grouper; a possibility of an over-harvest balanced against economic driver component. On the four-county gag grouper opening, there was concern that there would be penalties for overharvesting. The Commission felt these four counties needed an economic stimulus, but people in central Florida felt discriminated against because they would be left out. If the gag harvest in the four-county area is small, where is the economic driver? The issue is that many fishermen need a snapper harvest; a possible loss of days of fishing for 600 federal permit holders would occur with an inconsistency decision. A lot of revenue will be lost and many recreational

anglers that rely on that for access to the resource will be lost with inconsistency. He would like to let the governor know about the loss of jobs and revenue that would occur. He urged the Commission to stay consistent.

Chad Haggert (Double Eagle Fishing Fleet – Clearwater) urged the Commission to go consistent with federal rules and take care of fish stocks. More state water days are not helpful to him as there are not any snapper in state waters down in his part of the state; a shorter federal season hurts him. He feels that sector separation will give a little relief to the charter fishing industry. He is for it and hopes the Commission will support the exempted fishing permit, which is a two-year pilot program, to see if it will work better and bring economic relief.

James Zurbrick (Public fisherman - Steinhatchee) stated that his is from one of the four-counties included in the gag season but did not see an economic benefit. He state that at least one-third of the red snapper total allowable catch is caught in state waters and that inconsistency would shut down the for-hire sector. He asked the Commissioners to please go consistent. H also thanked the Commissioners for the enforcement of the IFQ. Commercial fishing has come a long way as far as accountability. He feels we need to be consistent to keep federal waters open as long as possible. Accountability in the recreational sector is going to be needed to solve this problem for the long term.

Captain Mike Eller (Destin Charter Boat Assoc.) said that he enjoys the working relationship with FWC. Further, he cautioned that there are hundreds of thousands of recreational fishers that come to Florida to fish; many do not have a boat and are dependent on for hire vessels to take them out. He does not agree with the lack of data and the way the feds manage, but believes we are attached at the hip. He would like to see real data used, and stop using statistics and outdated methodology. We must have state compatibility on this issue; the State of Florida bears a great burden; please protect Florida fishermen.

Scott Childress (Commercial spearfisherman – Odessa) agrees with consistency. He urged the Commission to take the charter guys into account. He feels that good changes are right around the corner.

Sharon McBreen (Pew Environment Group) supports staff recommendations and urged consistency with federal. Shows sign of recovery. We are now at eight percent SPR but need to reach twenty-six percent to be fully recovered. Mature fish surviving is critical to full recovery. Keep rebuilding plan on track. Encourage commission and staff to explore innovative management tools.

Tripp Aukeman (Coastal Conservation Assoc. – Tallahassee) read a statement from CCA National on non-compliance with federal regulations for Gulf red snapper regulations. Current regulations do not match reality nor reflect the good management that has been happening. He states that CCA members believe that the feds do not have our best interest in mind and a vote to not go consistent would send a vote of no confidence.

Jeff Miller (Coastal Conservation Assoc. – Florida) commented that CCA is on the fence about red snapper consistency. He reported that none of their members are in favor of the feds, but in an ideal situation would be in favor of consistency. Compression of fishing into a shorter time frame or area from inconsistency is not good either. He explained that we are told the decisions that Texas and Louisiana make will have an effect on us. Florida fish are not going to swim all the way to Texas or Louisiana. This is a n o win situation for the state of Florida. The decision lies with the Gulf Council, NOAA and Dr. Crabtree. He stated that CCA Florida will support whatever decision the Commission makes. The Commission manages well, but they would like the Commission to take state waters line out thirty miles.

Jason Delacruz (Gulf of Mexico Reef fish Shareholder’s Alliance) commented that FWC’s FWRI generates much of the data used by the feds and we are headed in the right direction; he feels that compliance is the way to go.

TJ Tate (Executive Director, Gulf of the Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance – St. Augustine) urged the Commission to stay consistent.

Pam Anderson (PCBA, NACO, Member Govt. Affairs/Bay County Chamber) feels that overages should not be held against anglers who abide by season closures and bag limits. She provided the Commissioners a handout that estimated red snapper biomass. Ms. Anderson further commented that the fish are doing much better than NOAA says. She urged the Commission to go inconsistent and to find out what the number of anglers that are actually fishing for reef fish is; we need accurate data and science.

TJ Marshall (Ocean Conservancy – Cocoa Beach) wants to do well by the resource and educate members about methods that are good for the resource but do not seem orthodox. Remember that the goal is to bring a better fishery, better economic benefits and we are trying to get to a sustainable 14 million pound harvest per year. Increasing pounds does not always equal a longer season. As with Quail and Osceola turkey hunting, the anglers will come for world-class red snapper. He supports consistency and he feels that the staff recommendation on Action 2 is the way to go.

Jerry Sansom (Organized Fishermen of Florida – Cocoa) feels that we do not have enough big fish. He suggested the Commission find ways to reduce the mortality on the very old, very valuable fish; this will help rebuild the fishery.

Under Discussion

Vice Chairman Wright made a motion to accept staff's "Action 1" recommendation, to go with the forty-day season, seconded by Commissioner Roberts.

Commissioner Corbett stated it was so important to protect the fishery and supported the motion.

Vice Chairman Wright would like staff to come up with a suite of options to protect the larger fish. He commented that we lose some larger fish to release mortality. Commissioners Corbett and Bergeron also are in favor of this.

Chairman Barco commented that we could restrict gear, lighten up tackle as one of the options.

Vice Chairman Wright felt that education on fish handling would help as well.

Commissioner Bergeron thinks consistency is important at this point as it looks like we are going in a positive direction. He feels that stock assessments need to be in a shorter period, it would provide long-term benefits to all our fishermen.

Chairman Barco asked Dr. Crabtree how we get around the penalty of increasing fish size and having bigger than predicted fish. Dr. Crabtree responded that it is a trade off for more stock assessments versus limits of staff and time and money. We would need almost annual assessments to improve our estimates.

Dr. Crabtree responded that if there were annual assessments on red snapper they would have to give up assessments on other species.

After Action 1 was approved unanimously, Commissioner Roberts made a motion for an alternative season if the federal season was shortened. His motion to retain a 40-day season, which would be implemented by an executive order, was seconded by Commissioner Corbett, and unanimously passed.

Anchoring and Mooring Pilot Program Ordinance – City of St. Petersburg

Chairman Barco asked Major Jack Daugherty with FWC's Division of Law Enforcement, to present a proposed anchoring and mooring pilot program ordinance for the City of St. Petersburg. Major Daugherty presented a review of the local ordinance prepared by the City of St. Petersburg in response to s. 327.4105, Florida Statutes, which allows a specific number of local governments to adopt regulations on anchoring and mooring of vessels

within their jurisdiction. He discussed definitions, created to clarify hazardous vessel, restricted anchoring with setbacks, and prohibited anchoring; in addition, he talked about the steps for enforcement and penalties. Staff is seeking approval from the Commission of recommendations to approve the ordinance, contingent upon changing the time restriction in Bayboro Harbor to anchoring no more than 10 days out of any 30-day period.

Commissioner Corbett asked what the difference between St. Petersburg and St. Augustine is. He responded that St. Augustine and St. Petersburg had different criteria and came at the ordinance with from different angles. Commissioner Corbett clarified that what we are approving right now appears to be differing from St. Petersburg. Major Daugherty responded that we might have to go back and amend the ordinance.

Commissioner Priddy asked if boaters would be turned away because of the 72-hour limitation. He responded that this would eliminate boats being stored and possible live aboard situations.

Vice Chairman Wright commented that he does not like the idea of telling the city what they should do. He questioned why we recommended 10 days versus 3 days. Major Daugherty responded that the public input was that 3 days was too short and that 10 days met the city's goals. FWC staff tried to strike a fair and balanced approach.

Chair Barco clarified the purpose of the ordinance, which is to stop permanent anchoring and keep the area for what it is supposed to be used for, to allow people to anchor there to visit the downtown area.

Public Comment

Macall Dyer (Assistant City Attorney for the City of St. Petersburg) introduced law enforcement members and the marina manager. She respectfully requested the Commission approve the ordinance as submitted. It is a very small area and by limiting to three days, it allows the enforcement officers the ability to enforce as well as let many different people use Bayboro Harbor. They have spent a lot of money developing a mooring field that has reasonable rates that can be used alternatively, so they can enforce the ordinance and make it fair to everyone.

Bonnie Basham (Boat US) supports staff recommendations because she feels that Vinoy Basin used to be a place of choice for everyone. Then a group got permits to build a mooring field in that basin, which displaced all the folks who now go to Bayboro Harbor. She asked that the city put the "state" definition of live-aboard in the ordinance, which is unique, so people who are not familiar with Florida can read and understand.

James Johns (Seminole) thinks exception should be put into the proposal

Jerry Sansom (Organized Fishermen of Florida – Cocoa) is a boater that is personally supportive of mooring fields, likes where this is moving and feels it will help reduce derelict vessels. He supports staff recommendations of changing from three days to ten days. He thinks the language of this ordinance will have an adverse effect on commercial fishers because of an old ordinance that says they cannot go into Vinoy Basin by rule if they have more than five fish on board. We need to be able to use these basins for shelter and create a definition of anchoring, or adding additional language that states that they are not trying to keep commercial fishermen away.

Andy Houston (City Manager Crystal River) welcomed the Commission to Crystal River and thanked the Commissioners for their efforts. He feels that this is a well thought out plan, which balances different needs; he encouraged the Commissioners to support it.

Chairman Barco asked Major Daugherty to address the issues related to small commercial boats. Major Daugherty responded that the ordinance includes a definition of safe harbor, which allows temporary anchoring due to mechanical or weather issues. It is not the City's intent to discourage commercial fishermen from anchoring, if it is blowing and they claim safe harbor. The enforcement mechanism for a violation is a 3-day notice to move the vessel.

Macall Dyer responded that a determination of safe harbor could be made. The mooring is only \$14 per day with shower facilities, car parking and a dingy dock available. If there is a violation, they are given a letter first telling them they are in violation, which provides time to correct the violation before a fine is issued. Our safe harbor is modeled similar to St. Augustine's. She further explained it is important that the live aboard language remains broad; otherwise, we have the burden of constantly changing the ordinance.

Jerry Sansom commented that Vinoy Basin is not available to us because of Commission rule. He further explained that it is subjective criteria of how hard the wind blows; why not say it does not apply to fishing vessels that are there for less than 24 hours.

Chairman Barco agreed and commented that you get to the same place, which says you have 3 days, the way it is now written.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Corbett to accept staff recommendations, and seconded by Vice Chairman Wright, the topic went under discussion.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked when this was open to public comments and why did the City keep 72 hours. Ms. Dyer responded that we stayed with the 3-day in 30-day period rather than 24 hours in a 14-day time period because it is easier to keep track of and will allow more people to come into the downtown area. She feels it address concerns they have heard, but still reaches a balance with the goals of the staff recommendations.

Commissioner Priddy said that she would like clarification on the City's amendment. Major Daugherty responded that it doubles the time and splits the difference, of 10 days in a 30-day period or 72 hours in a 14-day period.

Chairman Barco suggested that we should go with the option...since it is right downtown.

Vice Chairman Wright explained that this is a learning experience, if this number does not work, we can bring it back to revisit.

The motion passed to approve staff recommendations.

Wild Hogs in Florida

Chairman Barco asked Don Coyner with the Division of Hunting and Game Management to present a report on wild hog management and regulations. Dr. Coyner presented an overview on wild hog ecology and management. The purpose was to provide the Commission with background on the history, biology, values, problems and issues associated with wild hog management in Florida. This information can provide context and perspective for future management decisions the Commission may consider, such as managing hunting opportunities on FWC-managed lands. Staff is not requesting any Commissioner direction or actions at this time.

Public Comment

Newton Cook (United Waterfowlers of Florida/Future of Hunting in Florida) thanked Director Wiley, Ms. Eggeman and Dr. Coyner for starting this program a few years ago. He pointed out that people do not like buying hunting licenses in Florida because of the quota system; it is too complicated with too many rules. He thanked the Board for taking hogs out of the quota system and for providing additional spontaneous hunting opportunities.

Matthew Schwartz (Executive Director, South Florida Wildlands Assoc. – Ft. Lauderdale) stated that hog at 41.3 percent is a large percentage of panther food. This is important because we are formulating final regulations on the Addition lands. Hogs are important to panther, because the Big Cypress is a poor environment for deer. The

issue needs to be thought about at length. Hogs are an important prey species to the Florida panther; a lot more science needs to be done on the base line, and impacts of the panther on prey population.

Chuck Echenique (United Waterfowlers of Florida – Tampa) emphasized that we have wonderful hog populations in this area and he is grateful for the different hunting opportunities and especially the addition of hogs to the small game season; this has been fantastic and is showing that it works well. He added that panthers were here long before hogs were, and with removal of hog, they would revert to their previous food source. He thanked the staff and Board for their hard work on this.

Commissioner Discussion

Commissioner Bergeron commented that although hogs were originally invasive, they have been here for 500 years. They not only provide food for panthers, but also provide good opportunities for hunting, including youth hunting. He feels that we need to be more flexible on private land because of the destruction to the agricultural community, though he feels that the benefits outweigh the negatives. On his property, he has many hogs and panthers, and the hogs are a great food source for the panther. The Addition Lands would allow no hunting greater than the quota that would balance the food chain and not harm the panther; the way we allow hunting on private property. The balance is good and there are many positives. He is planning to provide more youth hunts; we need to balance this resource.

Commissioner Corbett asked Commissioner Bergeron to send his panthers to North Florida; we have many hogs and many problems with hogs. He asked Director Wiley how we could inform folks that they can hunt on private as well as public land to help control hog populations.

Director Wiley responded that it is not a one size fits all. In the south, we have size limits for take, as we move north we become more liberal. He agrees that it is a great way to get young folks out and provide hunting opportunity. He explained that hogs are becoming an economic problem in the southeastern states and folks are looking at innovative ways to manage them. In North Florida, we need to work with all our partners to push the envelope to allow private landowners to control hog populations on their land. In the south, we need to maintain the balance between a food source for panthers and public hunting opportunities and use hunting as the number one tool in managing hog populations on public lands.

Commissioner Corbett said that the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) spent a third of a million dollars to deal with hogs; Why not open up those lands to all hunters.

Commissioner Bergeron commented that we should encourage youth hunting opportunities on private land, and on public land, we should always consider the panther.

Chairman Barco commented that as bears and panthers increase their range, the hog becomes an important food source. We need to regionalize it and move with what works best, if it needs to be an aggressive stand, we need to do it.

Director Wiley explained that staff meets with water management district, land management staff every year and they are always looking for ways to control hogs; we also have stakeholders out there pushing the envelope to find solutions, but we have to go beyond hunting pressure.

Public Comments on Items not on the Agenda

Jeff Miller (CCA) thanked the Commissioners, especially Vice Chairman Wright for their great effort and work they are doing on the Biscayne National Park Issue, and all the other issues they work hard on.

TJ Marshall (Ocean Conservancy – Cocoa Beach) informed the Board that Ocean Conservancy sent out a press release that applauds the FWC commission for their leadership and commitment to ensure healthy fisheries in

coastal communities and thanked them for the work they are doing in relationship to red snapper. He also expressed that the BP oil spill provides a good opportunity to use oil spill restoration money towards stock assessments. Staff can pitch projects to NOAA and can help push them forward. What folks really want to see is how the fish are affected and feels there are higher than average problems with abnormalities with fish.

Jonas Porter (Tallahassee) reported the best crop of juvenile mullet this year since the late 1940s. He feels we need to consider trying to get a larger mesh size, or stop the fishing, to keep from killing juvenile mullet.

Matthew Schwartz (South Florida Wildlands Assoc. – Ft. Lauderdale) reported the Addition lands are heavily used by wildlife watchers, bird watchers and people who go to draw, paint, and photograph. They are within thirty minutes of six million people and heavily used for non-hunting purposes. FWC studies show that wildlife watching is participated in by 50% of the residents and tourists alike. The park is for the enjoyment of all the people of the United States, by those that visit and those that appreciate from afar. He urged the Commission to strive to keep one part of the preserve open for wildlife watchers; this would provide the best distribution of resources of the preserve.

Commissioner Bergeron clarified that the Addition lands are not a national park but a national preserve, and the intent of the Congressional act of 1974 says it shall be available for all users. He noted that it has been hunted for hundreds of years, dating back to the Indians. Any hunting or access would be allowed but only after a NEPA study concluded it would be OK. This is following the intent of the law, which says access for all users.

Newton Cook (United Waterfowlers of Florida/Future of Hunting in Florida) feels there should be a compromise after 30 years of people not being able to hunt. He thanked the Commission for their support of Big Cypress and gave credit to those who helped at the South West Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) meetings about hunting on district lands. He feels that the SWFWMD is basically against hunting on their lands and that the hearings were flooded with folks that have an irrational fear of hunters; they spend thirty million a year on hog control but will not allow hunters to take them. He invited the Commission to the August 24, Waterfowl Summit that FWC helps with and hopes as many as possible can come, it is free to attendees. He discussed the importance of the STA's, with 15,000 opportunities of which 12,000 were used, where the average take was 3.2 ducks and a total of 40,000 ducks harvested off the STAs in this past year. Please consider a visit to STA 1 West when you come to Palm Beach County in June.

Keith Ward (Wakulla Fishermen Assoc. – St. Marks) talked about county resolutions sent to the Commissioners about the county government wanting to rescind the 2-inch mesh rule. He said there were a few more resolutions on the way and he was available to answer any questions.

Chuck Echenique (United Waterfowlers – Tampa) extended an invitation to the Commissioners, to their Second Annual Florida Youth Outdoor Experience event at the Ocala Youth Camp.

Commissioner Exchange

Commissioner Bergeron talked about the recent visit with Vice President Biden and his tour of the Everglades. He made the comment that until you see the Everglades you do not realize how beautiful it is. He feels it strengthened the partnership with the federal government. He also mentioned that he is trying to monitor all the issues that might impact the Everglades and has a great deal of concern about the power plant that is being proposed in primary panther habitat. He noted that he has had meetings with primary staff and is requesting staff's assistance in looking at the location and its impact to panther and other endangered species, and the wildlife corridor.

Chairman Barco assured him that the resources are available to him and asked him to keep moving forward with our concerns.

Commissioner Corbett asked Director Wiley to follow up with finding ways to educate the public about hog hunting opportunities. Director Wiley suggested creating a total package that would highlight hogs, their problems and what people can do. He also commented that he appreciated staff's work on Red Snapper and complimented Major Daugherty for his work on the St. Petersburg Anchoring and Mooring Ordinance.

Chairman Barco talked about her experience with staff at Camp Blanding to tag bears. A video was shown about the tagging event. She reported that Camp Blanding actually helped fund the entire research project because they have so much land used for active fire and weapons training, that they wanted to make sure it did not affect the bears. She explained that this is the first sow that has reproduced in secondary habitat. We now know the numbers of bears on the maps we are using for our bear management plan are conservative and the animals have spread much further than is what is on those maps. She further explained that we gained a lot of information from this project and both baby bears have been tagged. The base has been extremely instrumental working with this program and many local elementary school programs are using this as a class project.

Commissioner Priddy commented that she now has a better understanding of the interconnectedness of all living things. She impressed upon the Commission that the panther plan calls for three populations in Florida, but as of right now we only have one population in Southwest Florida. For the plan to be successful, it calls for three distinct populations of 240 adults in Florida. The question we need to start asking is what we are going to do when we reach the 240 number, in addition to identifying those other areas. We are having more and more bear and panther people and livestock interactions in Florida and we need to consider the social (people) side of this. She would like the Commission to consider setting up goals to determine where the other two populations are going to be for panthers. She would also like to get more timely data for panther and the fisheries and not let ten years go by between assessments. As we get close to the biological carrying capacity, we need a frequent determination of how many we have and plan now.

Chairman Barco responded that there are expenses associated with panther work and that maybe we can connect this discussion to the budget process in the fall.

Commissioner Priddy acknowledged that she recognized there are costs involved and feels we should not bear the total cost, that it should be shared with the federal government.

Director Wiley agreed that we needed to be talking about where we go from here and stated that we are already working with landowners.

Commissioner Priddy is concerned the population is growing faster than our current plan allows for.

Director Wiley said that there is a lot going on in that regard and we need to come back with a full report and let the Commission help us figure out what to focus on.

Commissioner Bergeron commented it should take high priority, especially when you can add millions of acres of land for habitat, through conservation easements and private landowners, on to contiguous connectivity going north, between Big Cypress and the Everglades.

Chairman Barco said we would have a brief update on panthers at the June meeting in West Palm Beach. The idea is to let them naturally move north to set up their own sub-groups. If they cannot find food in contiguous space it is all for naught.

Commissioner Roberts emphasized that he appreciated staff for providing good information for the meeting, and said it makes it much easier for the Commission to make hard decisions. He especially complimented Ms. McCawley and Mr. McRae on today's presentation regarding red snapper. In addition, said we need to focus on educating anglers.

Vice Chairman Wright thanked staff for the great job in their presentations. In addition, he thanked staff for their help and information that they provided him for last week's congressional hearings on Biscayne Bay. Further, he thanked United Waterfowlers for what they do for the youth.

Chairman Barco discussed attending the rally in DC, in March for the Fisherman's Rally, United We Fish; reform for Magnuson Now. It was a successful trip and extremely eye opening; she appreciated the opportunity to represent our fishing community.

Recess

Chairman Barco recessed the meeting at 4:00 p.m., to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, May 3.

Thursday, May 3, Reconvene

Chairman Barco opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

Recognitions

Louise Ireland Humphrey Award

Chairman Barco asked Brett Boston, Executive Director of the Wildlife Foundation to present the Louise Ireland Humphrey Award. Mr. Boston introduced Erik Halleus, Board Member of The Wildlife Foundation, who talked about the passing of Louise Ireland Humphrey, making this year's award most significant. Mr. Boston continued with a brief description of the award. Commissioner Corbett also shared a few words in commemoration of Ms. Humphrey. Director Wiley added that she was a Commissioner early in his career and he remembered how she was very good working with staff, as well as being a champion for the things we cared about; her legacy lives on through the staff, Agency and Commissioners. Mr. Boston then introduced Gil McRae to say a few words about the recipient of this year's award, Ron Taylor, an Associate Research Scientist, with the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. Mr. Halleus presented the award to Mr. Taylor and then a photo was taken with the Commissioners.

Youth Hunting Program Landowner of the Year Award

Chairman Barco asked Diane Eggeman, Director of the Division of Hunting and Game Management to present the Youth Hunting Program Landowner of the Year Award. Ms. Eggeman briefly described the background of the award and introduced the recipient Lex Thompson. Chairman Barco thanked Mr. Thompson on behalf of the Commission for what he does in offering the wonderful experience of being in the woods and hunting, to the next generation of hunters. Mr. Thompson responded that they get more out of it than the youth, and then thanked the Commission for the youth hunting programs they offer. Commissioner Corbett pointed out that this is the future, if we miss this link there would be a huge gap and thanked Mr. Thompson for what he is doing. Ms. Eggeman introduced Kenny Barker, with the Division of Hunting and Game Management and one of the leaders with Florida's Youth Hunting Program. His position is a partnership position between our agency and the National Wild Turkey Federation and his efforts represents an important partnership on how we work with a non-profit partner organization. A photo was taken with the Commissioners.

Final Proposed Manatee Protection Rule for Flagler County

Chairman Barco asked Kipp Frohlich, with the Division of Habitat and Species Management to present a proposed manatee protection rule for Flagler County. Mr. Frohlich summarized the results of the public hearing and comment period and discussed the Statement of Estimated Regulatory Costs (SERC). He outlined the proposed zones, which include a total of 2.7 miles of Slow Speed zones in the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) along the 18.6 miles of waterway in the county. All zones would be in effect only during the 4-month warm season of May through September 7. He continued with an explanation of the different zones, which include 0.6 miles of

ICW in the vicinity of Hammock Dunes Parkway, in Lehigh Canal and 1.5 miles east of ICW in the vicinity of Lehigh Canal, 1.2 miles of ICW near Moody Blvd. (State Road 100). In addition, 0.9 miles of ICW from marker "20" to south of Mirror Lake, and 1.2 miles of Slow Speed outside of the ICW from Gamble Rogers State Recreation Area south to the Volusia County line, with the ICW regulated at 25 MPH. Staff recommended approving the rule for Flagler County and amendments to the rule for Volusia County as proposed in the Notice of Proposed Rule.

Commissioner Priddy asked if there was any concern about being able to post signs to clearly mark when someone was "in" or "out" of zones? Mr. Frohlich responded that marking zones is always an important part of the protection. However, since Flagler is narrow and the area well defined, posting signs should be easier than in other areas. The Division of Law Enforcement will help his group get this part right.

Chairman Barco recognized and welcomed former Chairman of the FWC Commission, David Meehan.

Public Comments

Bob Atkins (Citizens for Florida's Waterways – Merritt Island) read a letter. He feels the death rate is very small, eleven manatees is less than one quarter of one percent of the population. The premise is that by slowing down boats, you will reduce the risk, but this has not been proven. Auditory testing on manatees suggests that slow boats may actually be harder to avoid. People deserve more science; the collective zones implemented to date statewide have had no measurable effect on the reduction of watercraft-related manatee mortality. He asked the Commission to reject the rule.

Tracy Colson (Manatee Advocate for Crystal River Manatees) over one thousand individual manatees suffer from boat strikes; deaths are not the only reason for zones. The Manatee Management Plan describes risks from sub-lethal strikes of boats and many of the manatees are scarred from multiple encounters, and spend a lifetime recovering. She supports the rule but would like to see more protection in the southern half of the County; please when considering manatee protection, do not just look at fatalities, but also injuries.

Helen Spivey (Florida League of Conservation Voters Education Fund) said that manatees have a ticking time clock that cannot be turned back, they are facing extinction; she supports the rule and would like to request more protection. She urged the Commission to implement staff recommendations.

Matt Clemons (Crystal River Citizen) said he provides eco-tours in this area, and is hoping to expand into Flagler County. He told the Commission that he formerly worked on manatees in Ft. Myers, doing field necropsies, and feels that protection from injuries is important; mortality should not be the final say. Overall, he supports the rule and would like to see more protection.

Patrick Rose (Save the Manatee Club) said that staff has done a great job crafting a rule that will protect manatees from harmful collisions. The statute and rules have been implemented, and although more protection is needed, at least adopt this rule as presented.

Elizabeth Fleming (Defenders of Wildlife) supports staff recommendations. There is a lot of hard work that had been done to this point in time and staff has done a good job being open to the concerns of the community. This process is important because it has implications for many species around the state. Staff and stakeholders are working together on 61 other management plans and the message has been clearly stated, that it does not matter what you call the species, but how you manage for it. This is a concrete management plan adopted by Commissioners and staff; please keep the management process intact.

Katie Tripp (Save the Manatee Club) said she is still concerned about the southern half of Flagler County, with a high-speed channel; there are more deaths in Flagler, and the increase in threat, now we are implementing zones to hopefully be ahead of the curve. She is willing to work with us though and see what happens; Flagler is an opportunity to be pro-active. She supports staff recommendations.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Wright commented that this rule was reached after an exhaustive and transparent process; it is a good compromise and does reflect an example of what we should be doing. It is a good example of management of species; giving the most protection in the least restrictive way.

Commissioner Bergeron agreed that having a good balance with the least inconvenience possible was the way to go.

Upon a motion made by Vice Chairman Wright to accept staff recommendations, and seconded by Commissioner Roberts, the motion passed.

Central Everglades Planning Project Update

Chairman Barco asked FWC's South Regional Director Chuck Collins to present a report on the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEEP). Mr. Collins presented an introduction to the Central Everglades Planning Project and explained that it is an increment of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and is designed to significantly reduce planning times and deliver a finalized plan for some key restoration projects located in the central Everglades within 18 months. CEPP is a new Army Corps of Engineer's pilot planning process and is one of only seven projects selected as a pilot nationwide. He discussed the following issues they are addressing: The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration and why it is important, The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, The Central Everglades Planning Project, FWC's role and involvement in the Central Everglades Planning Project, and The Central Everglades Planning Project Timeline.

Director Wiley thanked Mr. Collins for taking the lead on this important project and discussed how much work is going on behind the scenes. Many key associates are watching this closely. Commissioner Bergeron's leadership has been inspirational.

Commissioner Bergeron stated that this is the largest restoration in the history of the world. It is very important that FWC have a seat at the table with the Everglades Task Force. It is the highest level of vision where important decisions are made that direct thirty years of efforts, and that will stop the most irreversible damage first. Tamiami Trail is one of the largest dams in the world; when Florida Bay is hurting for water and the Northern Everglades is flooding, emergency policy is important. One hundred year acts of God happen more often than that, we will lead the way for what needs to happen with our policy on how to get the water levels down. We need to add this to the toolbox with options to keep management of the water right until the various parts of Everglades Restoration have been completed. The Everglades are a natural wonder of the world and not only important to Florida, but the rest of the world. When we look at the Everglades, we have to look at multi-species management. He is proud of FWC and Mr. Collins in particular for playing a leadership role with the restoration. We need to keep the Everglades alive; events happen often, and if we do not have a toolbox, we can have catastrophic results.

Chairman Barco said that Commissioner Bergeron has been leading the charge for the Everglades since she has been on the commission

Vice Chairman Wright agreed that he has been a tremendous ambassador.

Public Comments

Newton Cook (United Waterfowlers of Florida/Future of Hunting in Florida) has been involved in this for ten years, and it is very complex and complicated effort. Without FWC and Mr. Collins, the work to ensure recreational access would be stymied. The Army Corps is serious about acceleration of all the different projects. He thanked the Commission and looks forward to working on this project in the next years.

Lyle McCandless (Big Cypress Sportsmen Alliance) is involved with this and wants to get further involved in all aspect of the Everglades, including the new headwater's project.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Mr. McCandless for all the work he is doing.

Legislative update

Chairman Barco asked Jackie Fauls, Director of Legislative Affairs, to present a legislative update. Ms. Fauls presented the 2012 Post-Session Report and briefly explained the four FWC bills that passed during the 2012 Session. She reported that the Governor has until May 5 to act on HB 313, Landowner/ Premises Liability. The three other FWC bills have been signed into law and include: HB 7025 - general agency package including, Trap Theft, HB 1223 - Swamp Buggies, and HB 1383 - Environmental Law Enforcement Consolidation. She expressed extreme gratitude for the hard work of the bill sponsors: HB 313 - Rep. Leonard Bemby, Rep. Greg Steube and Sen. Charlie Dean/Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee, HB 7025 - Rep. Steve Crisafulli/House Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee, and Sen. Charlie Dean/Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee. In addition, HB 1223 - Rep. Ben Albritton and Sen. Jack Latvala, and HB 1383 - Rep. Rich Glorioso, and Sen. Jack Latvala. She further expressed appreciation for the tireless efforts of stakeholders who supported the bills and FWC and staff including Brandy Elliott and Melinda Harris.

Commissioner Corbett remarked that the goal of Governor Scott is to try to make law enforcement more efficient in delivery of services and he appreciated the fact that our agency took leadership.

Vice Chairman Wright stated that it is a testament to FWC, that the Governor and Legislature had the confidence in the Agency, by giving us the responsibility to take this over.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Ms. Fauls personally; he is proud of our dedicated staff and law enforcement.

Ms. Fauls thanked the Commissioners for the time they donate to the State of Florida, but they do not want to take any more time than necessary from their business.

Public Comments

Bob Harris represents the scuba diving community in Florida. He acknowledged that Mr. Vielhauer serves the Commission well. Ms. Fauls and the rest of staff agreed with his legislation clarifying who has to get a fishing license when scuba divers go fishing off scuba diving charter boats and allowing them to amend the issue onto an FWC bill (HB 7025). He expressed appreciation for staff's trust and passage of the bill.

Update on the Florida Youth Conservation Center Network

Chairman Barco asked Rae Waddell, Director of the Youth Conservation Center, to present a progress-to-date report on the implementation of the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network. Ms. Waddell discussed the following: the 32 new partners and partner locations, Summer Camp Expansion Program, Tenoroc Youth Conservation Center, the 19th Annual Tenoroc Youth Fishing Derby, the Everglades Youth Conservation Center and the new curriculum development and Charlie Pierce Day. She reported that FAU, a new partner, was sold on Charlie Pierce Day, took over the program and hired our education coordinator. She explained this is the model we are looking for. Our senior level program focuses on careers in conservation, and is being offered to 11th grade. She continued discussing the Miami/Dade Parks and Recreation, summer fish camp expansion, which is incorporating Charlie Pierce Days into their park offerings, and our new partnership with the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa. She asked the Commissioners to look around their regions to find additional places to see an opportunity to bring the program to.

Commissioner Corbett said it is very important to ensure that youth take up the causes. He thanked Chairman Barco for allowing this to happen and support it. He also thanked Director Wiley and Ms. Waddell for moving this along at such a fast pace.

Director Wiley commented that our leadership has embraced this vision and Commissioner Corbett has been a champion.

Commissioner Corbett also asked others to locate people in the area and to look for financial support as well.

Vice Chairman Wright complimented Ms. Waddell and Commissioner Corbett. He commented that Commissioner Corbett has been the driving force, and have given guidance and direction. He added that South Florida is a success story.

Chairman Barco said this has taken off and grown fast and thanked Commissioner Corbett for his commitment.

Commissioner Bergeron mentioned his upcoming fundraising event in September, at the Alligator Ron Saloon. He also said that he explained to Governor Scott how important this program was to the state of Florida to get his support. This is the future.

Public Comments

Newton Cook (United Waterfowlers of Florida/Future of Hunting in Florida) is very excited about this program. They have 200 kids signed up in Ocala for a free event to introduce them to water habitat. He also talked about the upcoming Waterfowl Summit, in mid august. One purpose for this meeting is to get folks involved and he said he hoped for more FWC help with funding.

Lyle McCandless (President of Big Cypress Sportsmen Alliance) said they are getting schools to bring kids out for free swamp buggy tours of Big Cypress and they had about 150 kids lined up. They are having good success in getting parents to support youth activities and they are doing what they can to help that part of the state.

Commissioner Corbett asked him to share with Ms. Waddell how they go about getting schools involved and making them part of the program.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Mr. McCandless for his work. He also commented that he would like to talk about his co-sponsorship of the book "The Last Egret" at the June meeting.

David Meehan (Former FWC Commissioner/ Gilcrest Club – Trenton) said he is glad to be back and shared that he is happy to be involved with this project; that he was invited by Director Wiley to the Beau Turner fund raiser. He talked about the Gilcrest Club, which has 7 thousand acres and an elaborate infrastructure with kayaks, staff etc. working a M.O.U. He feels this is critical to the future of hunting and fishing and for young folks to experience wildlife.

Wally Armstrong (Professional Golf Association) represents PGA tour said there is a huge initiative in golf today to recruit kids into outdoor activities using golf as a recruitment tool, but golfers also enjoy fishing and hunting as well. He emphasized that it has been great seeing Commissioner Corbett's vision, to really get these kids out and into outdoor activities, which golf is. He is looking forward to bringing SNAG to your facilities geared towards younger kids; He is happy to be a part of this and to work with Commissioner Corbett.

Commissioner Corbett said this is a PGA professional, who found a way to get kids at two year of age to SNAG golf.

Director Wiley recognized Former Representative Sandy Safley, who provided good leadership and guidance on the Babcock Ranch Management program.

Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Lyle McCandless (President of Big Cypress Sportsmen Alliance) said that the harder we work the more behind we get. We are in the process of putting together the Big Cypress Stakeholder's Group; the purpose is to benefit all the users of the Big Cypress National Preserve. He announced the 14 individuals who are already on board with the group. He also commented that they have yet to see a hiker in the preserve because you cannot traverse the land without a swamp buggy.

Commissioner Bergeron discussed the Big Cypress and how a Congressional Act established it in 1974, as the first National Preserve in America. The intent of the Congressional Act was to incorporate all types of users. Some want to make most of the preserve to be treated like "Wilderness" rather than what it was intended to be and there have been multiple lawsuits filed. The real importance aspect is to complete the environmental study (NEPA) process, to allow use consistent with preservation, and then proceed with a management plan in order to protect the environment and follow the intent of the law.

Mr. Vielhauer confirmed that we are legal parties and have to submit documents to the Court in a very short time frame. The judge has set a very aggressive schedule and he thinks we will have a quick resolution.

Commissioner Bergeron stated the real protection of the environment is the management plan and environmental study that provides access for all the people of Florida.

Commissioner Priddy said she is from Collier County and the majority of the Big Cypress is in Collier County. She does not feel it can be opened up soon enough for all; she is glad to see that FWC is managing the property and that it is on a fast track. She offered her help.

Mr. McCandless also commented for the record that as a Member of DMTAG, he wants to bring the issue of the deer tagging and reporting program back before the Commission. He feels it is critically needed.

Jack Reynolds (Save Crystal River Inc.) is part of a newly formed 5013c Corporation that was formed in opposition to the manatee sanctuary in King's Bay. Kings Bay should be a poster child for success. The sanctuary is not needed; people and nature can co-exist. They formed to enhance the quality of water and life for the citizens of Crystal River and Citrus County, to educate the public regarding federal regulations and their impact, develop and support interactions, and remove derelict vessels from Kings Bay. He thanked the Commission for their outstanding job in protecting and providing balance. They look forward to working alongside the Commission to ensure the future for our children.

Matt Clemons (Citizen and Crystal River Tour Operator) said they support the refuge rule. The area has grown from 20,000 to 100,000 visitors for manatees, and they are allowed unrestricted access to manatees. The fish and wildlife service has clearly defined harassment for the first time and for enforcement purposes. They did not go for the "look but do not touch" approach that FWC has advocated. There are more boats and more manatees. There is a Manatee Protection Plan for Citrus County. Due to a lack of reproduction, the growth rate is down. The years of 2007-2008 were high mortality years and some videos of harassment were made that were very graphic; the new rules address this.

Tracy Colson (Crystal River Resident – Nature Coast Kayak Tours) has been documenting the harassment and injuries to manatees for 7 years. She supports the federal sanctuary and is grateful to FWC and the FWS for the support of manatees.

Mac Williams (Save Crystal River Inc.) presented a petition to block seizure of Kings Bay. They are requesting revision to the agreement between FWC and FWS. Legislature gave them support in its recommendation to oppose the federal sanctuary. He thanked Kelly Samak for helping him understand the legal issues. The petition you have before you has been amended and should be correct. He explained that it is not about the manatee or speed zones, but wanting to remove federal control over King's Bay. They want to amend the Cooperative

Agreement so that other places in Florida do not have the same fight. With FWC's stewardship, the rules in place for the recovery of the manatee are very successful.

Bonnie Basham (Florida Airboat Assoc/Boat US) complimented Ms. Fauls for her work on the swamp buggy issue and her efforts to get the bill passed. She also passed out copies of the Marsh Rider magazine. She wants to promote our youth conservation events through the magazine, it is what the magazine is about. She also wants to advertise our facilities and events and work with us; they want to be a voice for FWC too.

Commissioner Corbett thanked Bonnie for all she does for youth.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked her for all she does and asked her how many air boaters there are. She responded that there are 26,000 airboats registered in Florida.

Mike Dunn (Tour Operator) he also is a volunteer for Manatee Recovery programs in FWC and FWS. He supports slower channel speeds. He would like to see Manatee zones on NOAA charts and GPS devices that boaters use. People that have never seen manatees do not know what they are looking for. Retirees coming to Florida do not know what the boating rules are; we need to educate them. Boating in Crystal River area has been dangerous for divers because many boaters do not pay attention to dive flags. He acknowledged that injured manatees are helped soon in this area because of the "swim allow" and the high number of divers who will see the problems early.

Stacy Dunn said she supports manatee protection in both Flagler County and Kings Bay; it is unsafe out there and the new ruling is overdue. She thanked the Commission and other agencies for their help in manatee protection. She passed out a picture to the Commissioners.

Patrick Rose said he appreciated staff efforts. There has been five years of efforts in Crystal River to address the problems with divers and manatees; he said that he trusts that the Commission will do what is right.

Helen Spivey (Florida League of Conservation Voters Education Fund) said she appreciated the agency stand over the years. She also added many kudos for the web site. She sends many people to Myfwc.com.

Chairman Barco asked Mr. Vielhauer to explain the options on the petitions that have been filed. In addition, Dave Hankla is here and available to answer questions.

Mr. Vielhauer explained our responsibility with petitions. He discussed that we review the petition and then we look at what the options are, we can deny it, hold public hearing, or start moving forward with rule changes. We need to respond within thirty days. He further explained that staff has delegated authority. We need to look at our cooperative partnership agreement with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service under the endangered species act. They have asked us to add some language about taking into consideration all users.

Commissioner Bergeron asked if this can come back in front of us.

Director Wiley described that there is an administrative process to address this. He explained that the section 6 agreement is a global agreement for all the endangered species work we do with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and it is created to help us make changes. Second, it is a mutual agreement, and we can only ask the Fish and Wildlife Service, but it has to be mutually agreeable to make a change. The best thing to do is to allow us to work through this process and report back to the Commission.

Mr. Vielhauer explained that section 6 is a contract, not a rule and cooperative agreement that falls within our constitutional authority. When it gets manatee specific it becomes a legislative issue.

Chairman Barco explained that this is a group that does not agree with something that has been done on a level higher than FWC, so they will go through the proper channels to ask us to address this and move to rule making.

She commented that the first petition had problems, our attorneys helped them understand how to write it properly, and this is a new petition, which we have just received.

Commissioner Bergeron would like to be kept updated on the process.

Chairman Barco said it is important that if there is a citizens group that does not agree with something that a government agency does, there is a mechanism for them to try to change it.

Mac Williams said that this must go through a 30-day process, and that was our intent.

Commission Administrative Matters

Assistant Executive Director, Greg Holder, explained the process to develop the meeting dates and locations for 2013. We plan about a year in advance to obtain the best deals from the vendors and make sure that we pick dates and locations that move the meetings around the state for constituent involvement. We also takes into consideration legal notices, required other events, council meetings scheduled and holidays.

Chairman Barco asked if the September meeting was usually a three-day meeting. Mr. Holder responded that we have responded to several requests to make it a two-day meeting. He also pointed out that the meeting is a Thursday and Friday, September 5-6, because of the Labor Day Holiday.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Corbett to approve the 2013 Commission Meeting dates and locations, and seconded by Commissioner Bergeron, the motion passed.

Commissioner Exchange

Commissioner Priddy talked about the Lake Trafford Restoration, which is in her hometown, where they previously introduced 400,000 largemouth bass to the lake. She expressed appreciation for all the agencies, including FWC that contributed to this success story. The increased bass abundance and angling success shows that the fishery is recovering. She acknowledged what a great job staff did, and how it made a big economic difference to Immokalee as well as all the waters that flow through there to the south. Mr. Champeau thanked Commissioner Priddy for her involvement and then explained how this was a grass roots movement by the local folks in Immokalee which highlighted bass, but many other species are recovering as well.

Commissioner Corbett said this is a fantastic example of freshwater lake restoration and applauded Commissioner Priddy for getting the agencies and money together to accomplish this. He asked Mr. Champeau if he saw other opportunities in the state for similar projects. Mr. Champeau responded that Lake Apopka is in a similar state. Money was put into our budget from the last session to bring fishing back to that lake at a faster rate, which will provide benefit to the local economies and is very important to the state. The drought has had a huge impact all over the state on the public's ability to fish the lakes, and we try to take advantage of doing restoration where we can.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Commissioner Priddy for all her hard work on Lake Trafford that even dates back to before she was a commissioner.

Mr. Champeau introduced Noreen Clough, Conservation Director for Bass Anglers Sportsman's Society. He then discussed the BASS Elite Series Opens 2012 Season in Florida. It was a major bass tournament in Palatka and put our prime fisheries in the national spotlight.

Chairman Barco said she was honored to be asked to open the event and it was a great opportunity and economic impact to Palatka and local communities. She added that from there they went to the next tournament location, which was Lake Okeechobee.

Mr. Champeau talked about what a great event Lake Okeechobee was and the size of the fish caught is a real testament to that lakes recovery.

Ms. Clough said they love working in Florida.

Commissioner Bergeron reported that the Vice President's tour to the Everglades was great and he feels that it strengthened that partnership with the federal government to move the Everglades restoration along. He is very excited about the November fundraising event for Youth camps and thanked Commissioner Corbett for leading the way. At the next meeting, he would like to have a short presentation on the book "The Last Egret" a book he co-sponsored so that every 4th grader in Broward County School System will receive this book, which is a beautiful, real story of conservation. He discussed the Everglades Restoration and the emergency water management policy. He commented that it is a great success story and he thanked all the stakeholders. He thanked staff, especially Mr. Collins, who is available to him around the clock. He further thanked his fellow Commissioners. He thanked Vice Chairman Wright and Director Wiley for going to Washington and representing us so well. He showed a short video of a fishing trip he took with Sports Adventures in the Everglades.

Commissioner Corbett talked about Commissioner Bergeron's and staff's passion for their work as well. He thanked everyone for their dedication and hard work. He feels we need to continue to get the word out and let the public know what we can do. The picture showing the large spawning momma and 212 of the little guys is a good example of how we handle problems with fisheries.

Commissioner Priddy said it is a pleasure to be a Commissioner and be exposed to things that she would not have been ordinarily been, like being able to go to Homosassa and Three Sisters Springs. She feels that one of the largest issues the agency faces is alligator hunting. She would like to have to have a comprehensive review of alligator hunting, permits and season, again.

Commissioner Roberts thanked staff; he continues to be impressed with the quality of the presentations and talent level. As a new Commissioner, he noted that it made it much easier to understand the challenges we all face and make good decisions. He thanked Ms. Fauls for the excellent job in keeping us informed during session. He also thanked Chairman Barco for dinner, Commissioner Bergeron for his knowledge of, dedication, and efforts to the Everglades, and bringing the information to the table, and finally, he thanked Commissioner Corbett for his passion for the youth program. It is a privilege and honor for him to serve on the Commission; it was another good meeting and learning session for him.

Vice Chairman Wright expressed mega dittos for a wonderful job steering the meeting and thanked Chairman Barco for dinner. He felt an important thread running through the meeting was access, and said you cannot fall in love with what you do not see and have sustainable access to. He thanked our law enforcement officers, here or away, and said they are always appreciated and never taken for granted; it is the best law enforcement in the state.

Chairman Barco thanked local staff Mr. Garcia, Regional Director of the North Central region, and his staff for a great job. She also is thanked everyone involved in planning for the learning opportunities at both Crystal River and Homosassa Springs. She noted that tomorrow the Governor will be on the St. John's River in Jacksonville and Director Wiley and I will be with him. In addition, the following week we will be in the Keys for the Cabinet meeting. FWC will present a boater safety program for the Cabinet, and we will do a turtle release. She then discussed her experience with the JCOC program, where they visited the Military branches, with three of the five branches in Florida. At the next meeting, she would like to honor the Military and have all employees' trade in FWC uniform for their favorite military garb. She explained that this would be a military appreciation meeting for both days; we will support our military and highlight our many programs for military benefit.

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for June 27-28, in North Palm Beach, starting at 8:30 a.m. each day.

Adjournment

Chairman Barco adjourned the meeting at 1:18 p.m.

Kathy Barco
Chairman

Nick Wiley
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

Robin Stetler
Commission Administrative Assistant