



**Biscayne National Park**  
**Management Plans**  
Review and Discussion  
November 21, 2013



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

Version 2

This report provides an update on the status of two management plans being developed by Biscayne National Park: the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and the General Management Plan (GMP). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has been working closely with the National Park Service (NPS) on the development of these plans for more than ten years. A history of the issue and FWC involvement is presented, along with a summary of the management measures proposed under these plans that are of greatest interest to the FWC and its stakeholders, and the potential timelines for implementation of these plans. The Commission has expressed its support for the FMP at various stages of plan development and many of the management measures proposed under the FMP will require FWC rulemaking. The NPS has requested the Commission reaffirm its concurrence with the FMP before it is finalized. Recent developments in the GMP will also be reviewed.

*This presentation has been updated to include the details of the new supplement to the draft GMP that was recently released by BNP. Slides 17-23 have been added or modified.*

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*Photos in this presentation provided by FWC and NPS.*

## Presentation Outline

- Overview of Biscayne National Park (BNP)
- BNP management plans and the history of FWC involvement
  - Fishery Management Plan (FMP)
  - General Management Plan (GMP)
- Summary of the management measures proposed under the FMP – Commission action requested
- Review of recent developments in the GMP
- Next steps for BNP and FWC



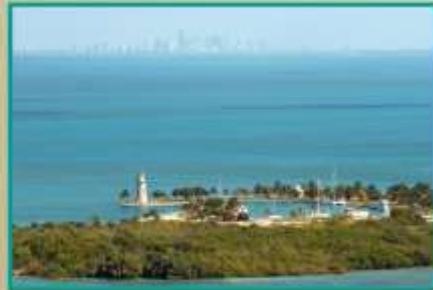
The presentation begins with an overview of Biscayne National Park (BNP) and a review of the goals of the two separate management plans currently under development at the park. This is followed by a summary of the history of the FMP and the management measures proposed under the current preferred alternative, which BNP desires to implement within park waters, pending concurrence by the Commission. This section of the presentation will include a request for action on the part of the Commission.

The remainder of the presentation will focus on the GMP and the timelines for implementing both plans. The GMP discussion also includes a summary of the history of that plan as well as an overview of the newly proposed measures developed through a collaboration between FWC and BNP staff that would allow continued fishing access throughout nearly all of BNP waters.

## Biscayne National Park



- Within sight of Miami – Nearly 2.5 million residents
- 95% is covered by water
- Easily accessed from 4 public marinas and boat ramps
- Hosts over 500,000 visitors per year
- Management and environmental challenges
  - Proximity to urban areas
  - Reduced water quality
  - Marine debris
  - Vessel groundings
  - Fishing pressure



BNP is a marine park located in highly urbanized Miami-Dade County in Southeast Florida. Park waters are within sight of downtown Miami, which is home to nearly 2.5 million residents and visited by an additional 8 million people, annually. The park encompasses most of Biscayne Bay, spanning from north of Key Largo to just south of Key Biscayne, as well as a series of islands and a stretch of natural areas along the mainland border of the bay, including park headquarters, located near Homestead.

Ninety-five percent of the park's 173,000 acres are covered by water, including coral reefs, sandy shoals and a largely undeveloped mangrove shoreline. Biscayne Bay itself is relatively shallow, with an average water depth of six feet. However deeper waters are found in the park, including Hawk Channel and the reef tract running north-south in the Atlantic Ocean waters along the eastern edge of the park, beyond the keys. The waters of BNP can be easily accessed from both public and private facilities, with four nearby public boat ramps and marinas launching an average of 62,000 boats annually.

BNP hosts at least 500,000 visitors per year, though this number is most likely an underestimate, given the difficulty of quantifying the number of visitors that access the park by water. BNP park managers face a variety of management and environmental challenges stemming from the park's proximity to highly-developed urban areas, including reduced water quality, marine debris, vessel groundings and fishing pressure.

# Biscayne National Park History



**1968:** Established as a National Monument

- Fishing regulations set by FWC, but can be modified by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior

**1980:** Established as a national park and expanded to its current size

- Additional waters acquired from the State of Florida
- FWC has final authority over fishing regulations in these areas




BNP was originally established by the U.S. Congress as a national monument in 1968 “to preserve and protect for the education, inspiration, recreation and enjoyment of present and future generations a rare combination of terrestrial, marine, and amphibious life in a tropical setting of great natural beauty.” When the monument was first established, both Congress and the NPS recognized the importance of the park waters to the livelihood of commercial fishermen within the Miami area, as well as their importance to recreational fishing. The Department of Interior and the NPS provided testimony to Congress that the [then current] commercial fisheries could be allowed within the park. Subsequently, the monument’s enabling legislation stated, “The waters within...shall continue to be open to fishing in conformity with the laws of the State of Florida except as the Secretary, after consultation with appropriate officials of said State, designates species for which, areas and times within which, and methods by which fishing is prohibited, limited or otherwise regulated in the name of sound conservation or in order to in order to achieve the purposes for which the national monument was established”. Therefore, while FWC fishing regulations do apply within the waters of the original monument, those regulations can be modified by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

In 1980, the monument was re-designated as a national park, in recognition of the “unique and special values” of the resources within the park, as well as the “vulnerability of these resources to destruction or damage due to easy human access by water.” At that time, the boundaries of the new national park were expanded to encompass additional lands and waters donated by the state of Florida. According to the enabling legislation at the time of the park’s expansion, the state of Florida retained all authority to regulate fishing in these added portions of the park. Thus the fishing regulations within northern and southern extremes of the park are under the full authority of the FWC.

## Diverse User Groups

- Recreational and commercial fishing
  - Flats fishing
  - Fishing for reef fish
  - Fishing for pelagics
  - Lobstering
  - Commercial shrimping, trapping, and ballyhoo fishing
- Recreational diving
  - Coral reefs
  - Historical ship wrecks
- Recreational boating and kayaking
- Hiking and birding





As is often the case when it comes to Florida’s natural resources, BNP hosts a variety of diverse user groups who sometimes have competing interests. BNP waters are important to both recreational and commercial fisheries. The private and for-hire recreational sectors frequent park waters to fish the flats, target reef fish and pelagic species, and to dive for lobster. BNP waters also support a variety of commercial fishing activities, which include the food shrimp industry that uses roller-frame trawls, lobster and stone crab trap fisheries, and the commercial ballyhoo fishery that uses surface-skimming lampara nets to harvest this very popular bait species from the waters at least one mile offshore, where their large nets can legally operate.

The coral reefs and historical ship wrecks inside the park also draw large numbers of recreational divers. Other visitors enjoy recreational boating, kayaking, hiking and birding within BNP.

## Park Management Plans



- Fishery Management Plan (FMP)
  - Long-term plan to balance recreational and commercial fishing with protection of fisheries resources
  - Ensure that fishing can continue to be sustainable
  - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FWC
- General Management Plan (GMP)
  - Overall long-term management and zoning philosophy to address different levels of resource protection and visitor use in various areas of the park
  - Current GMP implemented in 1983
  - No MOU with FWC yet



BNP is in the process of developing two separate management plans that will guide park operations for the years to come. The FMP establishes a long-term plan to balance recreational and commercial fishing in the park with protection of the park's fisheries resources such that fishing can continue as a sustainable activity for generations to come. This plan is intended to guide fisheries management decisions over the next five to ten years and is being developed, in part, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FWC.

The GMP is intended to establish an overall long-term management philosophy about visitor use and activities in the park and is concerned with zoning of the park into areas where different levels of resource protection and recreational activities occur. NPS general management plans are intended to guide decision-making and provide a framework for problem solving over 15 – 20 years, however BNP is currently operating under a GMP that was implemented in 1983. Although FWC does not have an MOU with BNP specific to the GMP, BNP has consulted with FWC periodically on its development over the last ten years, and staff from both agencies have been working in close cooperation on the most recent portions of the plan that will be discussed later in this presentation.

# Fishery Management Plan



This presentation reviews the progress of the two management plans separately, beginning with the FMP.

## Fishery Management Plan History



**2000:** BNP began development of FMP and GMP

**2002:** Commission and BNP signed the MOU

**2002 - 2004:** Working group meetings and public commenting

**2005 - 2012:** The Commission received updates periodically

**2007:** MOU renewed in September with Commission direction

**2008:** BNP and FWC agreed on a preferred alternative for the FMP; draft FMP released

**2010:** Commission confirmed its intent to initiate rulemaking on the preferred alternative

**2012:** MOU renewed for 2 years (expires Oct. 2014)



BNP has been working to develop an FMP for over ten years. In 2000, BNP began development of both an FMP and a new GMP. FMP development began with BNP staff asking the FWC to actively participate in and collaborate on the plan. This was done in recognition that, because of overlapping authority to regulate fishing, BNP and FWC should work together on fishery resource management by jointly developing a plan and subsequent regulations. An MOU was approved by both agencies in 2002, and included shared goals to work cooperatively on fishery management programs for the park. A working group was convened, which held a series of meetings to develop recommendations for the FMP, along with the collection of public comments from 2002-2004. Staff briefed the Commission on the status of the FMP following the release of the working group recommendations, and again periodically between that time and today. The MOU was renewed for another five years in September 2007.

In 2008, BNP developed a series of alternatives for public consideration and comment. BNP and FWC staff then decided on a preferred alternative for the FMP that will be discussed in subsequent slides. The draft FMP was then released in 2008. BNP held public workshops in July of 2009. In August 2010, FWC sent a letter from Chairman Baretto to then Superintendent Mark Lewis confirming the Commission's intent to initiate rulemaking following the approval of the FMP. Staff brought additional updates to the Commission in November 2011, May 2012, and June 2012. In October 2012, the FWC and BNP renewed the existing MOU for an additional two years, continuing it through October 2014.

## Purpose and Themes of the MOU



- Facilitates the management, protection, and study of BNP fish resources
- Intended to improve inter-agency coordination
- Recognizes that management goals inside a national park may be different than elsewhere in the state
- Confirms that FWC and BNP agree properly regulated fishing will continue within BNP
- Specifies that no-fishing zones (marine reserves) should not be considered in the FMP unless less restrictive measures have been tried and failed



The MOU between BNP and FWC was originally developed to facilitate the management, protection and scientific study of fish and aquatic resources within the park by improving communication, cooperation and coordination with the FWC. In the MOU, the two agencies acknowledge that more restrictive management measures may be necessary within BNP, relative to adjacent state waters to achieve the objectives of a national park. Through the MOU, the FWC and BNP agree that properly regulated recreational and commercial fishing will continue in BNP.

The MOU also emphasizes that the FWC believes no-fishing zones (referred to by the NPS as marine reserves) are overly restrictive and specifies that this type of management measure should not be considered within the FMP unless less restrictive measures have been tried, and have failed to accomplish mutual goals for the park. The Commission's opposition to no-fishing zones has been a point of contention throughout the development of both the FMP and the GMP (to be discussed later in this presentation) and the Commission has insisted that this portion of the MOU be retained each time the MOU was renewed.

## Fishery Management Plan – Status and Timeline



- NPS is ready to finalize the FMP
  - NPS and staff are asking the Commission to reaffirm its concurrence with the proposed measures in the plan
  - Confirm the Commission's intent to proceed with the rulemaking process toward achieving FMP goals
- NPS expects to finalize the FMP in 2014 and release a Record of Decision
- FWC staff would begin developing draft rule proposals following release of the Record of Decision



After more than ten years of collaborative work by the two agencies, the NPS is now ready to finalize the FMP. But before this can happen, BNP needs final confirmation that the Commission concurs with the management goals described in the preferred alternative. Therefore, NPS and staff will be asking the Commission to reaffirm its concurrence with the proposed management measures and confirm its intent to proceed with the regular Commission rulemaking process toward achieving the goals of the FMP.

Pending Commission reaffirmation of support for the plan, the NPS expects to finalize the FMP in 2014 and release a Record of Decision that formally adopts the goals and management philosophies detailed in Alternative 4. Once the Record of Decision has been released, FWC staff would begin developing draft rule proposals for public comment and Commission consideration.

All regulatory changes proposed in support of the FMP would be carried out through the Commission's regular rulemaking process, and are expected to include public workshops and multiple hearings before the Commission. If the Commission provides its concurrence with the preferred alternative, it will be committing to work with BNP to achieve the objectives of the plan and to consider the proposed regulatory changes described in upcoming slides. The public would have the opportunity to comment on each regulatory change considered by the Commission, and the Commission will review and consider them individually before they are incorporated into FWC rule.

## Fishery Management Plan – Preferred Alternative (Alt 4)



- FMP includes a suite of 5 alternatives spanning a variety of goals and expectations
- Preferred alternative (Alt 4) developed in cooperation with FWC staff
- Goal: increase abundance and average size of targeted fish and invertebrate species inside BNP by at least 20%
- A suite of changes to FWC's fishing regulations would be required to achieve this goal



The next two slides summarize the most important aspects of the FMP and the management measures that are proposed in the plan in order to accomplish the NPS' stated goals for the condition of fisheries resources in BNP. The FMP includes five management alternatives spanning a variety of goals for park resources. The preferred alternative (Alt 4) was chosen through a collaborative effort between FWC and BNP staff. This alternative focuses on rebuilding and conserving park fisheries resources and would require management changes to be implemented by the FWC. This alternative would make improvements to the parks fisheries resources, prevent further resource decline, and allow the sustainable management of recreational fishing in BNP. Under this alternative, adjustments would be made to fishing regulations in the park in order to achieve the stated goal increasing the abundance and average size of targeted fish and invertebrate species within the park by 20% over current conditions. A suite of regulatory changes to FWC rules would be needed to achieve this goal.

## Management Actions – Preferred Alternative



- Spearfishing limitations: no SCUBA or trigger mechanisms
- Eliminate lobster mini-season
- Commercial fishing slowly phased out via use-or-lose permit
- Coral reef protection areas and no trap areas
- Trap-free zone north and east of park headquarters
- Restrict traps from hard bottom habitat
- No-trawl zone within the bay
- Modified bag limits, slot limits, and seasons for some species



Photo by Jieyang Liu

These measures would require  
FWC rulemaking



In order to achieve the desired increases in abundance and average size of targeted fish and invertebrate species, the Commission would need to engage in rulemaking to modify fishing regulations within BNP. The primary regulatory measures proposed under the preferred alternative are summarized on this slide. The alternative proposes to limit spearfishing in the park to gear that lacks a trigger mechanism and prohibit the use of SCUBA or other air-providing equipment while spearfishing. These spearfishing regulations are less restrictive than other state parks and sanctuaries in Florida, which largely prohibit spearfishing altogether.

The alternative also proposed to eliminate the two-day recreational lobster sport season (mini season) in the park in order to protect coral reef habitat from diver-related damage.

The alternative also proposes to slowly phase out commercial fishing in the park via a special use permit issued by BNP. This permit would be a use-or-lose permit issued to current fishers with a history of landings in the park and would be non-transferable. The permit would create a mechanism to phase out commercial fishing when the fishermen currently fishing park waters leave the fishery. Shrimp trawlers would also be subject to inspection by park staff to ensure the trawl gear is in compliance with FWC regulations and would ultimately result in termination of the commercial fishing permit if the fisher failed three such inspections.

Trap-free zones would also be established north and east of park headquarters at Convoy point and in various coral reef protection areas would also be established, and deployment of any type of traps in these zones or on hard-bottom habitat would be prohibited.

Finally, a no-trawl zone would be proposed within a portion of the bay and modifications of current bag limits, slot limits, and seasons for some species might be considered in order to achieve the desired goal of increasing the abundance and average size of targeted fish and invertebrate species in the park by at least 20%.

## Commission Action Requested



In order for NPS to finalize the FMP, staff recommends the Commission send a letter to NPS

- Reaffirming FWC's concurrence with the management measures proposed under the FMP preferred alternative
- Confirming FWC's intent to proceed with the rulemaking process for the preferred alternative management measures in order to achieve the FMP goals

**BNP cannot finalize the FMP without FWC concurrence**



In order to finalize and implement the preferred alternative of the FMP, Commission action is necessary. Toward this end, staff recommends the Commission send a letter to NPS reaffirming FWC's concurrence with the management measures proposed under the FMP preferred alternative (Alt 4) and confirming FWC's intent to proceed with its rulemaking process for the preferred alternative management measures, in an effort to achieve BNP's goals of increasing the abundance and average size of targeted fish and invertebrate species in the park by at least 20%.

This action is needed because the NPS has informed BNP that it cannot finalize the FMP without FWC concurrence.

# General Management Plan



This concludes staff's presentation on the FMP. The remainder of the presentation will focus on the General Management Plan (GMP).

## General Management Plan Review



- Draft GMP released in 2011
- Included a series of 5 alternatives ranging from status quo (Alt 1) to the most restrictive (Alt 5)
- BNP selected Alt 4 as the original preferred alternative
  - Included a large no-fishing marine reserve (purple) and a series of poll-and-troll zones (bright pink)
- Many within the fishing public felt the zoning scheme limited fishing access unnecessarily



2011 NPS Preferred Alternative  
(Alternative 4)



This slide provides a brief review of the GMP, which is intended to create an overall management and zoning philosophy for BNP. Throughout the development of the FMP discussed earlier, BNP has also been working to update the current GMP, which was implemented in 1983. While FWC has an MOU with the park for the FMP, BNP did not wish to enter into an MOU with FWC for the GMP. A draft of the GMP was released in 2011. Like the FMP, this plan included a series of five management alternatives. These alternatives ranged from status quo (Alt 1) to the most restrictive environmentally preferable alternative (Alt 5). BNP also chose the 4<sup>th</sup> of the five alternatives listed in this plan as their preferred alternative. This alternative included a large no-fishing marine reserve and series of other zones, including poll-and-troll zones (referred to by BNP as Non-Combustion Engine Use zones), that limited fishing access to park waters.

This original NPS-proposed preferred alternative proved to be controversial during the public review. The FWC and many members of the fishing public felt the GMP preferred alternative was unnecessarily restrictive and that they it prohibited anglers from accessing a public resource.

## Reactions to GMP Original Preferred Alternative



- FWC submitted a letter opposing several aspects of the zoning scheme, including the no-fishing zone, under the Coastal Zone Management Act
- Congressional hearing held: FWC testified about importance of providing fishing access
- Staff was directed to work with BNP to develop ideas for alternatives to the no-fishing zone



As previously stated, many stakeholders opposed the no-fishing zone proposed under the GMP. The FWC also had significant concerns about the limitations on access to many BNP waters under the original preferred alternative. Following the 2011 release of the draft plan, FWC submitted a letter under the authority granted to the state by the Coastal Zone Management Act formally opposing several aspects of the preferred alternative zoning scheme, including the no-fishing zone.

Stakeholder anger and frustration over the restrictive nature of some of the zones in the GMP fueled existing concerns by local and national anglers about trends nation-wide toward reduced access to fishing grounds. And on April 27, 2012, a Congressional hearing was held in Washington D.C. to discuss what some viewed as the NPS' efforts to exclude the public from portions of BNP and other national parks. FWC participated in this hearing and testified about the importance of providing fishing access.

Following the release of the draft GMP, and the public concerns resulting from it, staff was directed to work with BNP staff to develop new ideas and additional alternatives for the GMP that did not include a no-fishing zone.

## General Management Plan Revision



- 2012 - 2013: FWC and BNP staff worked together to develop alternative management schemes that allowed more fishing access and met NPS goals
- BNP released a supplement to the draft GMP that includes the selection of a new preferred alternative
- New and novel approach developed that incorporates the quota hunt concept for fishing in a Special Recreation Zone (SRZ) within BNP
- SRZ will include intensive research and monitoring over a 10-year period to test effectiveness of meeting NPS goals



FWC and BNP staff met several times over the course of 2012 and 2013 to develop an alternative management scheme that would allow more fishing access and still meet BNP goals. These collaborative meetings resulted in development of additional management alternatives that would implement a new and novel approach to resource management within the portion of BNP that was set aside for a no-fishing marine reserve under BNP's original preferred alternative. On November 15, the NPS released a supplemental draft of the GMP that includes two additional management alternatives and the selection of a new jointly-developed preferred alternative.

The new alternatives create a Special Recreation Zone (SRZ) designed to provide a unique experience for both recreational divers and recreational anglers by creating an area with larger and more fish that more closely resembles a pristine reef system and where divers and anglers are less likely to encounter other fishers. In order to provide this experience, fishing would be limited through implementation of program modeled after the quota hunt system FWC uses to manage terrestrial systems. An intensive research and monitoring program would also be implemented in the SRZ over a 10-year period to test the effectiveness of the zone at meeting the NPS' goal of an enhanced reef experience for recreational users.

## General Management Plan – the New Alternatives (Alt 6 and 7)



- Two new plan alternatives (Alt 6 and 7) developed, including more fishing access

### Provisions common to both alternatives

- Previous no-fishing marine reserve converted to a Special Recreation Zone (large blue area)
  - Expanded relative to previous no-fishing marine reserve
  - Fishing allowed with some limitations
  - Research and monitoring plan being developed to guide adaptive management of the SRZ



New 2013 Alternatives  
(Alternatives 6 & 7)



FWC's primary motivation for working with BNP to modify the original preferred alternative was to provide more fishing access for Florida anglers. In order to do this, the new supplement to the draft GMP includes two additional management alternatives (Alt 6 and 7) with the modified zoning scheme shown on this slide.

Under both these new alternatives, the previous no-fishing marine reserve has been converted to the SRZ. Since recreational angling will be allowed, with some limitations, throughout this new zone, the SRZ has been expanded in size by 40% (4,157 additional acres) relative to the size of the previously proposed marine reserve (10,522 acres). By expanding the zone southward to the southern boundary of the original National Monument, the zone incorporates the park's largest and most pristine stands of federally threatened staghorn and elkhorns corals and spreads the fishing effort over a broader area. The northern, western, and eastern boundaries of the zone are the same as those previously proposed for the marine reserve.

FWC and BNP staff are also working together, along with staff from NOAA Fisheries, to develop a research and monitoring plan for the SRZ that would guide an adaptive management plan used to help ensure the regulations for the zone are appropriate to accomplishing BNP goals for the area. This plan will be discussed further later in the presentation.

## General Management Plan – New Alternatives 6 and 7 (continued)



### SRZ management under new alternatives (common to both Alt 6 and 7)

- Anchoring prohibited
- Active removal of marine debris
- No grouper harvest
- Hook and line only, except for lionfish and the commercial ballyhoo fishery (lampara nets)
- No commercial fishing except for permitted lampara nets



New 2013 Alternatives  
(Alternatives 6 & 7)



The key new feature common to both alternatives 6 and 7 is the SRZ. Both alternatives contain a series of common management measures aimed at creating a special place (the SRZ) with more high quality coral reef habitat, more and larger fish, and where divers and anglers are less likely to encounter other fishermen.

Under both Alt 6 and Alt 7, an effort would be made to actively remove existing marine debris from the SRZ at the onset of its implementation. Anchoring would be prohibited throughout the zone, with BNP installing additional mooring buoys over time to create better recreational access. All grouper harvest would be prohibited in the SRZ due to the fact that underwater visual surveys conducted as part of a multiagency (including FWC) monitoring project indicate that the number of legal-sized groupers in the SRZ is extremely low. The only allowable fishing gear within the SRZ would be hook and line, with two exceptions. Removal of lionfish would be allowed with a limited number of authorized gears and the commercial ballyhoo fishery permitted by FWC to fish with lampara nets would be allowed to continue to operate in the zone because the gear does not come into contact with the bottom and prohibiting them from fishing in the SRZ would likely create a significant economic hardship for the lampara net endorsement holders in the region.

## General Management Plan – New Preferred Alternative (Alt 6)



### Fisheries management in the SRZ (provisions unique to Alt 6)

- New and novel approach to management of marine habitats
- Open to fishing year-round for a limited number of anglers
  - Permits issued by FWC: Special Activity License (SAL)
  - Issued via random draw
  - Number of permits based on estimated abundance of snapper in the zone
  - No more than 500 permits annually (430 private anglers, 70 fishing guides)
- Mandatory monthly logbooks
- FWC would partner with BNP on research, monitoring, and rulemaking



**Alternative 6 is recommended by FWC staff**

BNP, in collaboration with FWC, has selected Alt 6 as its new preferred alternative. Under this new preferred alternative, there would be additional management measures implemented through FWC and federal rulemaking to implement the quota hunt concept in the SRZ. This application of the quota hunt concept would be a new and novel approach to management of ecologically important marine habitats, like the portions of Florida's reef tract within BNP.

Under Alt 6, the SRZ would be open to fishing year round, with the limitations described on the previous slide. However, under Alt 6, access would be limited through the issuance of a limited number of FWC-issued permits. These permits would be issued as Special Activity Licenses (SALs) and would be awarded through the current license vendor via random draw. The number of SALs to be awarded would be based on the estimated abundance of snappers (gray, mutton, yellowtail, and lane, and hogfish) in the SRZ-area, as determined by the multiagency visual survey of reef fish. The numbers of SALs would be set such that no more than half of the estimated number of legal-sized snapper would be removed from the SRZ during any given year. Based on these calculations, the initial number of SALs issued would not exceed 500 annually, with a maximum of 430 being issued to private anglers and no more than 70 issued to professional fishing guides.

Anglers fishing in the zone would be required to submit a monthly logbook detailing things like the number of trips taken, the number of people fishing, the species composition and size of fish caught, and how many fish were harvested. These logbooks would be reviewed as part of the research and monitoring project and would be used to ensure the number of permits issued did not result in higher than expected levels of harvest.

Under Alt 6, FWC would continue to partner with BNP by participating in the research and monitoring of the SRZ. FWC would also conduct rulemaking to implement the SAL-based angler permitting system, and develop the other fishing regulations specific to the SRZ, as described in the preferred alternative. Of the two newly proposed alternatives, FWC staff has recommended BNP adopt and implement Alt 6.

## General Management Plan – Additional Alternative (Alt 7)



### Fisheries management in the SRZ (provisions unique to Alt 7)

- SRZ closed to all fishing June – Sept
- Open fishing access Oct – May
- No fishing permit required
- All aspects of research, monitoring, and rulemaking carried out by BNP

*Alternative 7 is not recommended by FWC staff*



In addition to the preferred alternative (Alt 6), BNP also developed a second new alternative (Alt 7) as part of the supplement to the draft GMP. This alternative is somewhat similar to the previously described preferred alternative and was created in order to give park stakeholders more than one new alternative for consideration.

Alt 7, if implemented instead of Alt 6, would allow for open access fishing October – May, but would close the SRZ to fishing entirely during the summer months of June – September. Because fishing during the non-summer months would be open access, there would be no need to issue permits and monthly logbooks would not be required. All the other limitations on fishing in the SRZ described earlier would still apply. If the NPS chooses to implement Alt 7, FWC would not be further involved in the process and BNP would conduct all aspects of the research, monitoring, and rulemaking on its own.

While this alternative is simpler and does not limit the number of anglers that would have access to the zone, it does eliminate all fishing during the summer months when anglers most commonly target snapper species.

The new and novel management approach incorporating the quota hunt concept outlined in Alt 6 is not part of this alternative. FWC staff does not recommend BNP implement Alt 7.

## General Management Plan – Next Steps and Timeline



- Public comment period open, public meetings coming
- SRZ implementation, including issuing of SALs anticipated to begin by January 2016
  - *Would require FWC rulemaking*
- Adaptive management measures evaluated after 3, 5, and 8 years to adjust the number of SALs issued, if necessary
- BNP intends to reconsider the need for a no-fishing marine reserve after 10 years



The supplement to the draft GMP was released online on November 15<sup>th</sup> and the public comment period is now open. The public comment period will remain open for 90 days (through February 14), with three public meetings planned at various locations around southeast Florida the week of December 9<sup>th</sup>.

Pending the review of public comments, the NPS is tentatively planning to finalize the GMP in 2014, with the SRZ being fully implemented by January 2016. Should BNP adopt Alt 6, MOUs with FWC would be developed and staff would plan to initiate FWC rulemaking to implement the SAL program and other regulatory aspects of the SRZ in 2015.

Once the SRZ is in place, an adaptive management approach would be implemented using the information gathered from the SRZ logbook program and BNP creel surveys to evaluate whether or not the assumptions about harvest rates used to determine how many SALs to issue were appropriate. These and other assumptions would be evaluated according to the research and monitoring program after 3, 5, and 8 years. If BNP and FWC staff find that the harvest rates in the SRZ are exceeding expectations, the number of SALs issued to fish in the zone would be adjusted. In addition, after five years, an external team of experts would be convened to evaluate whether the research and monitoring program is adequate to evaluate the success of the SRZ relative BNP goals.

After ten years, BNP intends to use the information gathered by the research and monitoring program to determine whether the goals of a more complete, more pristine reef ecosystem have either been achieved, or trending toward being achieved, within the SPZ. At that time, BNP will reconsider whether or not a no-fishing marine reserve is required to meet the park's goals and whether or not to convert a portion or all of the SRZ to a marine reserve.

## Staff Recommendation



### Fishery Management Plan

- Reaffirm concurrence with the management measures proposed under the FMP preferred alternative in a letter
- Pending release of the Record of Decision, direct staff to initiate the rulemaking process by developing draft rules for Commission consideration that would implement proposed management measures

### General Management Plan

- Direct staff to continue to work with BNP, attend BNP public meetings, and provide updates at a future Commission meeting



With respect to the FMP, staff recommends the Commission send a letter to the Superintendent of BNP reaffirming its concurrence with the FMP and the goals and management measures proposed under Alt 4, the preferred alternative for the FMP, and confirming its intent to proceed to rulemaking in support of the preferred alternative. Pending the release of the Record of Decision in 2014 that confirms BNP has adopted Alt 4 of the FMP, staff also recommends the Commission direct staff to begin developing draft rules for Commission consideration that, if adopted, would implement the proposed management measures.

With respect to the GMP, staff recommends the Commission direct staff to continue to work with BNP staff, attend the public meetings planned for the week of December 9<sup>th</sup>, and provide the Commission with updates as needed at future Commission meetings.

If BNP adopts Alt 6, the new preferred alternative for the GMP, staff will return to the Commission in late 2014 or 2015 with recommendations for the development of MOUs relative to scientific monitoring and management of the SRZ as described in the plan, including an SAL program modeled after FWC's quota hunt program.