



# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting  
April 15-17  
Havana, FL  
Minutes

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

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held its regular meeting April 15-17, 2014, at the Florida Public Safety Institute, located at 85 Academy Drive, Havana. Chairman Richard A. Corbett called the meeting to order with the following members in attendance:

Brian Yablonski, Vice Chairman, Tallahassee  
Ronald A. Bergeron, Ft. Lauderdale  
Bo Rivard, Panama City  
Aliese Priddy, Immokalee  
Chuck Roberts, Tallahassee

Senior and Presenting Staff:

Nick Wiley	Executive Director
Eric Sutton	Assistant Executive Director
Bud Vielhauer	General Counsel
Colonel Calvin Adams	Director, Division of Law Enforcement
Chuck Collins	Director, South Region
Thomas Graef	Director, Southwest Region
Steve Shea	Director, Northwest Region
Shannon Wright	Director, Northeast Region
Chris Wynn	Director, North Central Region
Diane Eggeman	Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management
Tom Champeau	Director, Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management
Jessica McCawley	Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Gil McRae	Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
Melissa Recks	Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Martha Bademan	Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Dr. Thomas Eason	Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Doc Kokol	Director, Community Relations
Jackie Fauls	Legislative Affairs Director
Ignacio Sanchez	Director of Information Technology
Cory Morea	Deer Management Program Coordinator
Harry Dutton	Division of Hunting and Game Management
Jamie Fedderson	Waterfowl and Small Game Program Coordinator
Kristin Sommers	Exotic Species Section Leader
Bill Cline	Section Leader, Division of Hunting and Game Management

There were twenty-six individuals registered to speak to the Commission during the three-day meeting.

**Meeting Opening**

Chairman Corbett called the April 15-17, 2014 meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

### **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag**

Ms. Diane Eggeman, Director of the Division of Hunting and Game Management, gave the invocation, followed by Vice Chairman Yablonski leading the Pledge.

#### *Special Announcement:*

Chairman Corbett asked Executive Director Nick Wiley to give a brief update on the recent bear incident that occurred in Lake Mary, Florida.

### **Commissioner Strategic Discussion – Future of Conservation**

Wildlife in Florida: Conflict to Coexistence to Conservation. Ms. Eggeman discussed the impacts of wildlife events or interactions and the road to sustainable coexistence and then introduced Mr. Jim Sterba, author of *Nature Wars: the Incredible Story of How Wildlife Comebacks Turned into Battlegrounds*, who shared his insight into the increase in human-wildlife interactions and the management measures being utilized to address this issue.

Next, Dr. Thomas Eason, Director of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, discussed Florida's perspective of wildlife conflict and management moving towards community co-management.

Chairman Corbett opened up the floor for Commissioner comment on this topic.

Commissioner Roberts stated that it is important to develop a method to determine a level of co-existence between humans and wildlife. We need this method in order to proactively identify situations before they turn into problems.

Mr. Sterba noted that it may be difficult to determine an acceptable level of co-existence between animal populations and human acceptance. It's the planning and reaction portion that is the priority of getting a grasp on this issue.

Vice Chairman Yablonski commented that up to this point, conservation has been all about the loss of the species and recovery of those species. Now we are shifting to the narrative of gain, or dealing with more of the animals around. Wildlife management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to have to shift the mode of thinking in order to deal with the new issues and conflict management. He added that FWC needs to get the right tools to adapt to the new management issues that are associated with conflict management. Finally, he asked if the sale of game, at least in dialogue, is a viable option in addressing some of these concerns.

Mr. Sterba pointed out the reasons why the sale of game wouldn't be a viable option anytime soon.

Chairman Corbett asked how an agency would go about implementing an approach of selling game as an option for dealing with conflict management. He asked if there are there specific requirements on how an animal is harvested that designates whether it would be approved for sale or not.

Mr. Sterba responded with examples of how animals can be harvested and pointed out that there are negative perspectives on each example that may prevent approval for the animal meat to be sold.

Vice Chairman Yablonski added that it first has to be a species that is identified as at critical or nuisance levels, and then FWC would need to clear the limitations set by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other regulating agencies for human health safety.

Commissioner Roberts conveyed the difference in social acceptance related to hunting in today's society compared to two or three generations ago. Reaching out to youth and providing opportunities for them to learn about these species and the populations of animals in the environments is key.

Ms. Eggeman was asked about the ability to sell game. She explained that wild hogs may be the most likely candidate to move forward with a proposal to sell wild game. However, the biggest barrier is the concern for human health safety.

Executive Director Wiley noted that FWC has staff working to answer these difficult questions and address these challenges.

Commissioner Priddy stated that when she joined the Commission, she identified a goal that FWC be more of a proactive agency and not be afraid of challenging the limits to ensure we are addressing these issues. She noted that this group of Commissioners is not afraid of making those difficult decisions, but the public is always a main concern in these decisions.

Commissioner Bergeron commented that most of these issues are related to loss of habitat as the human population grows. FWC has to focus on preservation of pristine resources in Florida to expand the environment capable of supporting these species. FWC should work to get conservation easements on more land throughout Florida and more resources to manage those lands.

Mr. Sterba brought up the idea that a hefty fine as a penalty for feeding wildlife would get people's attention and most likely deter them from repeating the negative behavior.

Vice Chairman Yablonski captured six action items from the discussion.

- Reassessing the role of hunting in Florida including increasing youth hunting. With this comes the responsibility of educating the general public to increase the understanding of hunting.
- Education of sharing of the habitat. Human populations will continue to increase, and these human/wildlife conflicts will continue to exist.
- The training provided by schools and universities needs to have more attention on conflict management techniques and processes.
- In some cases, hunting alone may not be enough. Some species have recovered to the point that hunting alone would not reduce the amount of negative conflict. FWC should research additional incentives for harvest that could be utilized.
- The public viewpoint that wild animals are pets is the wrong image. FWC needs to get the message out that feeding wildlife is not an appropriate action because of the consequences of those actions both for the animal and for people. Helping people realize that wild animals are not pets and should not be fed as such should be a high priority.
- Structuring for the commonality of conflict. Currently, FWC manages wildlife on the species level, but there are common traits related to conflict that can be addressed at the same time and can reduce the amount of conflict on a larger level rather than just species by species. The structure of the agency can be adapted to deal with the commonality of conflict.

Commissioner Rivard stated one of the slides he found most interesting in the presentation was the Social Carrying Capacity slide. Bears are an example of a species that would fall under the threshold of "minimum number tolerated by society without high risk of extinction" if we gauge the maximum number that is socially acceptable based on human interactions.

Mr. Sterba suggested that agencies should utilize the technology of today's society to make it more popular to learn more about nature and wildlife in Florida.

Chairman Corbett asked Mr. Sterba for any closing comments about the State of Florida and this Commission.

Mr. Sterba stated that several state wildlife agencies are reluctant to deal with issues involving conflict wildlife. Florida has been forced to deal with these issues because of the increasing population. FWC has stepped up to make some of the hard decisions related to this topic, which makes Florida ahead of the curve with human wildlife interaction.

Executive Director Wiley, closing out the discussion, commented that Mr. Eric Sutton, Assistant Executive Director, has captured these action items and will also coordinate with Vice Chairman Yablonski to ensure everything is included in the final list. The Commission noted that stakeholders will play a vital role in helping to ensure Florida addresses these issues comprehensively.

Public Comment:

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Laurie McDonald, Florida Director for the Defenders of Wildlife, provided comments to the Commission on this topic highlighting the importance of enforcement of FWC rules and regulations related to human-wildlife interactions.

Commissioner Priddy commented that the Defenders of Wildlife do an amazing job working with landowners in her area when dealing with panther and bear issues.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell, Director of Wildlife Conservation for Audubon Florida, provided comments to the Commission on this topic and asked the Commission to think about ways that the agency can use the community co-management approach not only to assist with conflict wildlife issues, but also to help with imperiled species.

Mr. Chris Doolan, Government Relations Consultant representing the Small County Coalition, provided comments to the Commission regarding human-bear interactions in Franklin County.

Commissioner Bergeron asked if the effect of proper bear-resistant containers in Franklin County would reduce the number of issues.

Mr. Doolan responded that the use of proper containers would significantly decrease the number of issues, along with enforcement.

Perspectives on connecting family and youth to the outdoors. Mr. Jim Fowler, a professional zoologist and former co-host and host of the Emmy Award-winning television show Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* from 1963-1988, gave his perspectives on connecting family and youth to the outdoors. He challenged FWC to have conversations with the public on wildlife interactions and explain why people should care about wildlife. Conservation agencies have to learn how to balance regulations, nuisance animal issues, and the need for more habitat. He suggested that FWC use the media and highlight the positive stories that help gain interest of the public in learning more about wildlife.

Executive Director Wiley noted that the media is still a tool that FWC can learn to use more effectively.

Increasing Participation in Conservation. Next, Commissioners heard a presentation on strategic challenges to increase participation in conservation by reaching Florida's youth and families, and by extending the agency's conservation message throughout Florida's diverse cultural audiences. Captain Diego Toiran, host of *Pescandoen Los Cayos (Fishing in the Keys)*, addressed how he created a fishing sport/marine conservation message oriented toward the Hispanic audience.

Chairman Corbett stated he would like to work with Captain Toiran to help organize youth conservation centers in the Miami-Dade county area and also to reflect on how FWC can increase the diversity of its staff.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Mr. Fowler for his efforts toward conservation and preservation of the environment throughout the world.

Mr. Fowler noted that society will have to start thinking more about hunting and harvesting as the human population expands further. FWC will also have to start reserving more habitat to help address this issue.

Commissioner Priddy asked Captain Toiran what FWC can do to help with the outreach effort to the Hispanic population.

Captain Toiran responded that education should be the main focus of FWC in assisting with the outreach effort to the Hispanic population.

Commissioner Priddy asked if apps on the MyFWC.com website utilize both the Spanish and English language.

Mr. Tom Champeau, Director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management, replied that education is the biggest tool that can be used to address this issue. FWC is currently working on Spanish versions of public service announcements, license applications and smartphone applications.

Chairman Corbett inquired about the awareness of rules and regulations among Hispanic youth.

Captain Jorge Pino, Division of Law Enforcement, responded that FWC has increased the efforts in the Southern portion of the state to reach out to Hispanic users. One effort was to address the issue of signs posted on piers and bridges which were written only in English. FWC has reposted Spanish language signs to help educate the public who frequent those fishing areas. He confirmed that hunting and fishing is a big part of the Hispanic culture.

Mr. Champeau added that the expansion of the Florida Youth Conservation Center Network (FYCCN) in South Florida is a key aspect to increasing diversity. He mentioned a new partnership that will help Florida promote fishing and boating within the Hispanic Community for a period over the next 5 years.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Lane Stephens provided comments to the Commission on connectivity of getting youth into the outdoors. He provided an update on The Outdoor Education Course which is now offered online via the Florida Virtual School and as of the end of March, 2014, 1743 students have completed this course.

#### Commissioner Exchange

Commissioner Roberts noted that the most important message on all the topics from today is education.

Commissioner Priddy stated that this is a very exciting time for FWC and she is glad to be part of the agency moving forward knowing that we have an opportunity to make such a big impact to the State of Florida.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Chairman Corbett for his leadership during these topics today. One key aspect for FWC is to create a master plan of pristine areas and look to see how the agency can add additional resources for Florida's wildlife. Another important part is evaluating where the lands are that have the most benefit to species and providing incentives to landowners to keep the environment in that format.

Commissioner Rivard commented that the main take away from today's discussion is that FWC needs to get on offense with regard to messaging.

Vice Chairman Yablonski thanked the speakers again and added that the more we connect folks to the outdoors and the idea of conservation, the more opportunities are created where the knowledge of nature can help proactively solve some of the conflict issues.

#### **Recess Tuesday's Portion of the Meeting**

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, April 16, 2014.

#### **Wednesday, April 16, Reconvene**

Chairman Corbett reconvened the meeting at 8:35 a.m.

## **Recognitions**

### **Louise Ireland Humphrey Award**

Chairman Corbett invited Mr. Brett Boston, Director of the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, to introduce this award. This award recognizes an FWC employee for lifetime achievement. Ms. Deborah Burr, Gopher Tortoise Management Plan Coordinator, introduced the recipient.

Ms. Joan Berish, the award recipient, thanked the Wildlife Foundation of Florida Board of Directors for this award.

### **Chairman Rodney Barreto Employee of the Year Award**

Due to the recipient of this award dealing with the current high priority issue related to bears, the Chairman Rodney Barreto Employee of the Year Award was postponed until the June 2014 Commission Meeting.

### **Shikar-Safari Officer of the Year Award**

Colonel Calvin Adams, Director of the Division of Law Enforcement, introduced the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Colonel Adams highlighted several reasons why this officer was nominated and chosen as the recipient of this award. Mr. Jim Harrison, a member of the Shikar-Safari Club, presented the award to Officer Lee Lawshe.

Officer Lawshe thanked the Commission and added that he has a great team to work with in the Division of Law Enforcement and within the agency.

## **Adoption of Minutes**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Rivard, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and carried, the February 2014 minutes were approved as written.

## **Adoption of Meeting Agenda**

Chairman Corbett asked to amend the April agenda to take up Item 12. A. Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC), prior to Item 11. A. (1) Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Season. The Chairman also requested to move item 9, Chairman's report and item 10, Commissioner Strategic Discussion: Habitat Conservation, to follow the Marine Fisheries Management Items.

A motion was made by Commissioner Priddy, seconded by Commissioner Rivard and carried to adopt the April 2014 Commission Meeting Agenda as amended.

## **Approval of Consent Agenda**

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Yablonski, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the April 2014 Consent Agenda was approved.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Wiley spoke of the recent passing of former FWC Officer Tom Shirley and his wife.

Commissioner Bergeron spoke of Officer Shirley's efforts in conservation and education throughout the community to protect wildlife and asked for a moment of silence in honor of Officer Shirley.

Executive Director Wiley highlighted the following items from the report:

- FWC Officer Lawshe received The State Law Enforcement Chief's Association (SLECA) Officer of the year award
- Mr. Bob Wattendorf with the Division of Freshwater Fisheries received the 2014 Rich Cailteux Award from The Florida Chapter of the American Fisheries Society
- Update on Apalachicola Oyster Fishery
- Tenoroc Shooting Facility remodeling coordination project

- Snail Kite recovery
- FWC host of the Annual SEAFWA Conference in October 2014

Vice Chairman Yablonski added that over the past weekend, Beau Turner received special recognition for his work with initiating the youth conservation centers. The Wildlife Foundation of Florida presented him with the award at the annual Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center Open House where over 1000 people attended and had the opportunity to learn more about conservation. FWC staff did a wonderful job volunteering to assist, and it was a great event overall.

### **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Update**

Ms. Martha Bademan, Section Leader with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, summarized the actions and discussions from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council) April 7-11, 2014 meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Topics discussed included several red snapper items, including a recent lawsuit against NOAA Fisheries concerning the management of the recreational red snapper fishery, subsequent emergency action taken by the Council on red snapper, a recent Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requested by federally-permitted charter boats in Alabama, and long-term management options for the recreational red snapper fishery. Other topics discussed included an update on the status of the "30B rule," red drum management in federal waters, and final action taken on mackerel and cobia amendments. Staff requested direction on long-term red snapper management options, including recreational accountability measures, sector reallocation, sector separation, an IFQ-type program for for-hire vessels, and the EFP for federally-permitted Alabama charter boats. She noted that unless otherwise directed, staff will continue with previous direction from the Commission on sector reallocation and continue to stay neutral on sector separation. Lastly, Ms. Bademan noted that the next Council meeting will be June 23-27 in Key West.

Commissioner Roberts asked about the Council's discussion on sector separation for private and for-hire vessels and what percentage of allocation would be distributed to the different sectors in the fishery.

Ms. Bademan responded that sector separation is still in the early stages of discussion, so there are no specific allocation projections at this time.

Commissioner Roberts asked for clarification on future red snapper quotas based on the sector reallocation option selected by the Commission at previous meetings.

Ms. Bademan replied that final action on sector reallocation has not yet been taken by the Council and that the previous decisions made by this Commission are in line with the Council's preferred option of reallocation.

Chairman Corbett asked about the potential timeline for sector reallocation or sector separation to take effect.

Ms. Bademan responded that any changes to current sector allocations could potentially be finalized by the Council in August 2014 and could go into effect for the 2015 season, whereas sector separation is not as far along in the rulemaking process and would most likely not be in place until the 2016 season.

Commissioner Roberts noted that FWC would have to have a significant number of discussions with both private and for hire stakeholders on sector separation. He asked what happens moving forward if sector separation is not approved.

Ms. Bademan replied that there was a lot of discussion about sector separation at the last Council meeting. Stakeholders are not happy with the 11 day season, so there are a lot of people who are interested in different management approaches to address the problems in the fishery.

Commissioner Roberts noted that sector separation would affect everyone. He stated that FWC needs to ensure the recreational angler is taken into account when it comes to making changes in the regulations. Red snapper management is challenging, and the Commission needs to be sure to manage the resource based on the data that

available for Florida. He also added that FWC has done a good job of managing the resource over the past 14 years.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Pam Anderson, owner of Captain Anderson's Marina, addressed the Commission regarding Red Snapper fishery management suggesting that Florida can better manage recreational fishing. She opposed sector separation, fish tags and catch shares for red snapper.

Mr. Trip Aukeman, Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) of Florida, addressed the Commission and stated CCA's opposition to privatizing fisheries when it comes to fisheries management. He stated that CCA suggests transferring management of the fishery to the states and also requested FWC stay the course with current direction given to staff on sector reallocation of red snapper.

Mr. Jimmy Forehand, independent commercial and recreational fisherman, addressed the Commission regarding red snapper and equality of fishing for recreational anglers.

Mr. Bill Staff, Alabama Charter Fishing Association, addressed the Commission and provided additional details on the Alabama EFP pilot program.

Mr. Gary Jarvis, President of the Destin Charter Boat Association (DCBA), addressed the Commission in support of the new Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. Additionally, he asked the Commission to consider going compliant with the federal red snapper season.

Mr. Bob Zales, federally-permitted charter boat captain out of Panama City, addressed the Commission and stated that NOAA Fisheries is not equipped to manage recreational fisheries.

Mr. James Zurbrick, commercial fisherman out of Steinhatchee, addressed the Commission regarding the lawsuit that was filed against NOAA Fisheries to hold them accountable. He also stated his support for the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. He stated opposition for sector reallocation and support of sector separation and an IFQ-type system for charter boats.

Mr. Matt McCloud, owner of a federally-permitted charter boat out of Pensacola, addressed the Commission with support of the 52 day non-compliant state season for Gulf red snapper. He stated opposition to sector separation.

Ms. Candy Hansard, Emerald Coast Reef Association, addressed the Commission with comments of the economic impact of recreational fishing in the State of Florida. She asked the Commission to consider pulling out of the Council along with other states to make fishery management decisions in federal waters on a state level.

Mr. Danny Tankersly, Lady J Charters, addressed the Commission in opposition to the head boat EFP previously issued by NOAA Fisheries. He also stated opposition to the Alabama charter boat EFP.

#### Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett thanked Ms. Bademan for her dedication to all of these complex issues.

#### **Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Season**

Ms. Bademan summarized a final rule for Gulf of Mexico red snapper that would set the recreational harvest season of red snapper in all state waters of the Gulf of Mexico to begin the Saturday before Memorial Day, May 24, through July 14, and last a total of 52 days. Staff recommended that the Commission approve the proposed rule to modify the recreational harvest season for red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. If approved, staff recommended making the rule effective May 24, 2014.

Commissioner Roberts added that the Commission has the responsibility to make the best decision on management for red snapper in Florida state waters using the information that is available. He asked that staff work with recreational fishermen, charter boat captains and an outside facilitator to get additional information on the fishery and data collection efforts to better understand the needs of all stakeholder groups.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Pam Anderson addressed the Commission and distributed a research paper by Dr. Bob Shipp on red snapper. She asked FWC staff to consider the recreational management option of only allowing red snapper to be harvested out of the 25 fathom depth contour.

Mr. Bob Zales addressed the Commission and encouraged an increase to the number of days in the current 52 day proposal. He stated concern over the Alabama EFP and then voiced support for the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System.

Mr. James Zurbrick addressed the Commission expressing concern over enforcement of the 52 day season for Gulf red snapper.

Mr. Jimmy Forehand addressed the Commission asking about the criteria for season lengths. He voiced concern over the saltwater fishing permit process that has slowly become more restrictive on individuals.

Mr. Gary Jarvis addressed the Commission and asked for support from the Commission in the upcoming months as the Council discusses alternative management approaches for federally permitted charter for hire vessels.

Commissioner Roberts asked Mr. Jarvis about the DCBA's perception of the proposed EFP for federally-permitted charter vessels in Alabama.

Mr. Jarvis replied that DCBA has wrestled with the options related to the Alabama charter boat EFP pilot program. He noted that DCBA is going to focus on better solutions to management of the fishery at this time, considering options such as a charter IFP, recreational tags or a days-at-sea program.

#### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Rivard expressed appreciation for all the points of view from the speakers today. This is a difficult issue, and the Commission makes decisions based on what is best for the resource and the people of Florida. Florida has attempted to be consistent with the federal season length over the past 14 years. He noted that the efforts to rebuild the red snapper stock through shortened seasons seem to have worked and people are seeing more red snapper now than ever before. He stated that even with the improved status of the stock, the federal seasons continue to get shorter, and at this point it doesn't make sense for the Commission to go consistent with the 2014 federal recreational season.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted that Florida's management of this fishery is very appropriate and conservative even with the 52 day season proposal.

#### Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Bergeron and carried, the Commission unanimously approved the staff recommendations for a 52 day season for the recreational harvest of red snapper in state waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Commissioner Roberts asked if a decision was needed in regards to the pilot program in Alabama.

Ms. Jessica McCawley, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, responded that a decision is not required at this time. She added that direction was provided at the February Commission Meeting for staff to

draft a letter on 30B and in the same letter express dissatisfaction on the federal headboat EFP pilot program. The comment period was never opened due to 30B just recently being submitted to NOAA Fisheries and the Council voting to keep 30B in place at their last meeting. However, there will be an upcoming open comment period for the proposed EFP pilot program for federally-permitted Alabama charter boats and staff is prepared to draft a letter on Florida's concerns for that program and also 30B.

Commissioner Roberts asked staff to prepare this correspondence based on previous direction and the upcoming opportunity to provide comments to NOAA Fisheries and the Council.

Chairman Corbett called for a 5 minute break

### **Sea Cucumbers**

Ms. Melissa Recks, Section Leader with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, summarized a proposed final rule for sea cucumbers. She explained that the commercial marine life fishery has requested that FWC implement a commercial trip limit out of concern that the expanding market will lead to overharvest. Ms. Recks reviewed Commission direction to date and several management options that were reviewed by staff but not recommended. Staff recommends approving the proposed draft rule establishing a commercial trip limit of 200 individual sea cucumbers per person per day, as well as a daily vessel limit of 200. These limits would be overall limits, inclusive of all sea cucumber species. If approved, staff recommends making the rule effective on June 1, 2014.

### **Public Comment**

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Eric Lee, representing the Florida Sea Cucumber Corporation, addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal, and recommended a 500 – 800 bag limit per day instead.

Mr. Leo Lhu addressed the Commission regarding this topic in support of sea cucumbers being a food source.

Mr. Jeffrey Turner, President of the Florida Marine Life Association, addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendations.

### **Commission Action**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bergeron, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendations.

### **Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System**

Ms. Bademan and Mr. Gil McRae, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, presented a draft rule to create a Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System (data reporting system) that would require private recreational reef fish anglers to report their intention to harvest or attempt to harvest red, black, and gag grouper, red and vermilion snapper, gray triggerfish, and amberjacks (including greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish and almaco jack) off Florida's Gulf coast. This data reporting system would be used to collect more accurate, precise, and timely catch and effort estimates. Staff recommended the Commission approve the proposed draft rule to create the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. If approved and directed, staff will return for a final public hearing in June. Based on rulemaking timelines, staff suggests a targeted effective date of April 1, 2015.

Chairman Corbett reiterated that improvement in recreational fishery data is desperately needed and asked if there are apps that can be developed to help gather this data electronically.

Mr. McRae replied that there are currently apps for gathering data on red snapper (such as iSnapper). He stated that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) proposal that is funding this data reporting system also contains a pilot program to develop a Smartphone app for Florida's recreational fisheries.

Commissioner Priddy noted that her initial reaction to this proposal was this was another item people will have to worry about getting before they go fishing. She asked what would happen if an individual didn't intend to catch something on this list, but ended up landing one of the species and wanted to keep it.

Mr. McRae responded that the individual would have the option to call in to the data reporting system at that time from a cell phone. He also noted that law enforcement would address this situation in the same way and try to get individuals signed up on the spot.

Commissioner Priddy asked if FWC will gather enough data on these species during the five-year pilot project to be useful and would it be appropriate to sunset this system after the five-year pilot ends.

Mr. McRae stated that we should see significant improvement in the data. He stated that it is always an option to sunset this program after the five-year period.

Commissioner Priddy stated that rules list this could be considered as steps to having to report everything you ever intend to catch, which would be burdensome to the angler, and we should assess this pilot program after five-years. She also asked how FWC is planning to notify people about this new requirement.

Mr. McRae clarified that not everyone who signs up for this data collection system will be contacted. Also, those that are contacted for survey purposes have the right not to answer any questions. He stated that answering survey questions is voluntary. As to the notification of the public, he advised that there are a lot of tactics to promoting this new requirement. He mentioned that one challenge would be marketing this requirement to individuals 65 years old and older that are exempt from purchasing fishing licenses in general.

Commissioner Rivard commented that initiating the new requirement for anglers to report in order to get better data into the management of recreational fisheries is important. He mentioned the FWC needs to properly educate the general public and make sure the reasoning behind the system is explained clearly. He suggested possibly adding incentives to the process to increase participation. Finally, he suggested the FWC review the enforcement aspect of this process after the program has had time to be successfully established.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Pam Anderson addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation. She also offered assistance in organizing groups of anglers to assist in the implementation of the system along with FWC staff.

Mr. Chad Hanson, representing the Pew Charitable Trusts, addressed the Commission and distributed a letter in support for this system. He suggested including all anglers above age 16 and all reef fish species.

Mr. Trip Aukeman addressed the Commission and stated that CCA Florida supports this system with the comment that there is no cost passed down to the individual after the five-year time period.

Mr. Jimmy Forehand addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal and stated that getting catch information from anglers at the docks is the best method to collect data.

Ms. Candy Hansard addressed the Commission and suggested that the charter industry be included in this proposal. She also warned of the dangers of requiring recreational anglers to report to the data reporting system, concerned that the program could become limited access in the future.

#### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Roberts asked for clarification on the data being provided by charter vessels.

Mr. McRae replied that FWC is currently getting the detailed trip log information from charter vessels. As part of the NFWF proposal, data collection in the for-hire sector will be improved as well.

Commissioner Rivard commented that this is additional regulation to the public, even if it is justified. FWC needs to be as creative as possible to ensure the average person has an incentive to participate.

Commissioner Priddy stated that she agrees with the system, but wants to note that there are flaws in the data reporting system as presented and it will not be a perfect way to collect recreational data.

Ms. McCawley noted that along with the potential incentives for anglers, staff will also develop a proposed outreach plan to help address several issues raised today and bring that to the Commission at the June Commission meeting.

### Commission Action

Commissioner Priddy moved that the Commission accept the staff recommendations with the addition of a five-year sunset provision, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried.

### **Lionfish**

Ms. Recks presented a summary of the recent, ongoing and planned future efforts to combat Florida's lionfish invasion, as well as a series of three draft rule amendments to decrease the likelihood of additional lionfish releases and reduce regulatory barriers to lionfish harvest. Staff recommended the Commission approve the proposed draft rules. Staff also recommended the Commission direct staff to continue to work with partners and stakeholders to find additional ways to encourage and facilitate lionfish control and removal.

Commissioner Priddy asked if there was a law that prevented people from releasing lionfish they had in personal aquariums, which was confirmed by Ms. Recks.

### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Pam Anderson addressed the Commission on this topic. She asked that the commercial diver requirement be waived for recreational divers in Bay County who wish to supply harvested lionfish to restaurants.

Ms. Recks replied that the FWC encourages lionfish on the menu; however, harvesters must have a commercial license in order to facilitate enforcement of the seafood safety requirements.

Ms. Candy Hansard addressed the Commission in support of removing the prohibition on rebreathers and the other steps; however she stated concern over the small steps being taken in this proposal to deal with lionfish infestation. She asked the Commission to review her proposal.

Chairman Corbett responded that she should work with Ms. Recks to submit her proposal.

Mr. Lad Akins, representing REEF and GSARP, addressed the Commission in support of most of the proposed rules in the staff recommendation. He requested live imports continue to be allowed from areas outside Florida that are also battling the lionfish invasion.

Mr. Jeffrey Turner, with the Florida Marine Life Association, addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Todd Sumner, president of Northwest Florida Marine Industries Association, addressed the Commission in support of the draft rules, but requested the opportunity to work with staff on some updates to some of the rule language.

Mr. Bob Harris, representing DEMA (Diving Equipment and Marketing Association), addressed the Commission and offered support for FWC staff on this problem. DEMA would be interested in working with staff on the commercial licensing issue as well.

#### Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Rivard, seconded by Vice Chairman Yablonski and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendations.

#### **Fishery Management Council Updates**

Ms. McCawley presented a review of actions and discussions at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's March 3-7, 2014 meeting in Savannah, GA. Ms. McCawley noted that no specific direction is requested at this time and the next meeting will be held in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL on June 9-13, 2014.

There were no public speakers and Commissioners had no additional discussion on this update. The Commission thanked Ms. McCawley for the update.

#### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Corbett reminded everyone of the strategic discussions being brought to the Commissioners.

#### **Commissioner Strategic Discussion – Habitat Conservation**

Dr. Eason introduced Mr. Jon Oetting with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), the guest speaker for this topic.

Mr. Oetting gave a brief background on FNAI, explained the coordination efforts with FWC, and then discussed the importance of conservation planning.

Dr. Eason wrapped up this strategic discussion topic by providing a comprehensive overview of habitat conservation in Florida with an emphasis on FWC's Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system. He thanked Commissioner Priddy and Commissioner Bergeron for their assistance as the liaisons for this topic.

#### Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett thanked Mr. Oetting and Dr. Eason for their presentations.

Commissioner Priddy asked how FWC's WMA systems compare to other states.

Dr. Eason replied that the area of public land that Florida manages is much larger than other states. Most other states, especially out west, have a lot of private or federally owned and managed land.

Vice Chairman Yablonski reminded everyone that the Commission will take up private lands as a Commission Strategic Discussion topic in June. One of the things that bridges the public and private land management topics is WMA's. He asked if there are there things FWC can do more of to make the public land option more appealing to private landowners.

Executive Director Wiley stated that the take home message on this topic is that FWC carries out a lot of land management with little resources. The economy is beginning to recover and should have a positive effect on budgets for the programs that benefit public land management.

#### Exotic Species Coordination-

Mrs. Kristen Sommers, Exotic Species Coordination Section Leader with the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, gave an update to the Commission on the Exotic Species Coordination Section.

There were no public speakers on the item. The Commission thanked Mrs. Sommers for the presentation and moved to the next item with no further discussion.

#### General Counsel Report

Mr. Bud Vielhauer, General Counsel, introduced the Commissioners to this new agenda item. The General Counsel report highlighted major legal cases currently on-going at the FWC.

#### **Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda**

No public comment

#### **Commissioner Exchange**

Chairman Corbett thanked everyone for the great meeting today.

#### **Recess Wednesday's Portion of the Meeting**

Chairman Corbett recessed the meeting at 4:45 p.m., to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, April 17, 2014.

#### **Thursday, April 17, Reconvene**

Chairman Corbett reconvened the meeting at 8:41 a.m.

#### **Meeting Opening and Recognitions**

##### Florida/Georgia Quail Coalition

Executive Director Wiley welcomed invited guests who were seated at the tables along with the Commissioners to highlight a new and amazing partnership. Those guests recognized at the meeting included; Mr. Dan Forster, Director of the Wildlife Resources Division for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Mr. Howard Vincent with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, Mr. Bill Palmer representing Tall Timbers and Ms. Daphne Wood, Wildlife Foundation of Florida board member.

Executive Director Wiley asked Mrs. Eggeman to provide a brief explanation of what this partnership is all about and the goals moving forward with this unique opportunity.

Mrs. Eggeman spoke about this coalition and recognized several FWC employees who are key in this partnership.

Chairman Corbett then asked each invited guest to say a few words about this partnership.

Mr. Forster thanked FWC for welcoming the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to participate in the meeting.

Mr. Vincent commented that one of the major efforts for his organization to be addressed with this partnership is youth education.

Ms. Wood thanked the partners and stated that this coalition has the opportunity to be leaders for quail conservation throughout the country.

##### Youth Hunting Program Landowner of the Year Award

Mr. Bill Cline with the Division of Hunting and Game management introduced this award and spoke about the recipient.

#### Special Recognition- Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network

Ms. Rae Waddell, Director of the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network (FYCCN), gave a brief background on the status of the FYCCN. One of the highlights briefly discussed was the importance of the public/private partnership within this program. The Mosaic Company has been a major partner with this effort in Hardee County, and they were recognized for their efforts in increasing youth participation in conservation in the state of Florida. Ms. Waddell also acknowledged the Wildlife Foundation of Florida as a major partner in this initiative and asked Mr. Carlos Alfonso to speak on behalf of the Foundation.

Mr. Mark Kaplan, Vice President of Public Affairs with The Mosaic Company, thanked the Commissioners for the special recognition. He stated that the Mosaic Company is excited to be a part of the success of the FYCCN. Mr. Kaplan also thanked Ms. Waddell for her diligent work on this project over the last few years.

#### **Final Rule Deer Management Units Zone D**

Mr. Cory Morea, Deer Management Program Coordinator, reviewed the proposed new rules and amendments related to Deer Management Unit Zone D. Staff requested the Commission approve the proposed rule amendments for Zone D's DMUs to spread out antlerless deer day and implement additional antler regulations to protect young bucks. If approved, the rules would be effective July 1, 2014.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Lyle McCandless, President of Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance, addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendations.

#### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Mr. Morea and staff on this great step toward deer management. Having the high percentage of stakeholder agreement on this issue is a great asset to the management of the species.

#### Commission Action

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Yablonski, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendations.

#### **Draft Rules Amendments to Alligator Rule**

Mr. Harry Dutton, Alligator Management Program Coordinator, reviewed the proposed changes to seven rules governing its Alligator Management Program. Mr. Dutton noted that feedback received thus far on the suite of draft rule changes has been generally supportive, with suggestions for some additional rule changes, including additional alligator hunting hours and use of baited wooden peg as a non-lethal method for release. Staff requested Commission approval of the draft rule amendments for advertising and final public hearing at the June 2014 Commission meeting, and approval to continue working with stakeholders on possible statutory changes for consideration at the September 2014 Commission meeting.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Bill George, manufacturer of alligator harvest equipment, addressed the Commission in support of most of the rules proposed. He asked the Commission to consider adding additional hunting hours. He also voiced opposition of bringing the license into the recreational sector as proposed.

Mr. Lyle McCandless addressed the Commission and thanked staff for reviewing this program and providing recommendations for updates.

### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Bergeron commented that the Commissioners heard some feedback from stakeholders that may need to be reviewed prior to coming back to the Commission in June.

Chairman Corbett reminded Commissioners that these proposed rule changes are being sought in order to clean up the rule language and to move the program forward.

Commissioner Priddy asked about waiting to incorporate the changes until the next meeting. She was concerned that it would cause a delay in the changes being adopted.

Executive Director Wiley stated that if Commissioners have suggestions to incorporate into this proposal, staff can amend the draft rule today and move forward. He advised the Commission that we have constituents who have opinions about both sides of the changes being drafted for review, and those individuals may not have been here to provide their comments on this topic.

Mr. Dutton noted there was a large scale review completed several years ago on the number of hunting hours allowed, and the current amount was a compromise for all stakeholders involved in the program.

Chairman Corbett stated that Georgia currently allows 24 hours of hunting.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked what the objection is to the 24 hour proposal by some stakeholders.

Mr. Dutton responded that there have been concerns of conflict with recreational boaters and users on the waterways if hunting was allowed 24 hours a day. Another reason is that the best harvesting time for alligators is during night time hours. Finally, he added that the heat of the day has had concerns by stakeholders of the possibility of introducing spoiled alligator meat into processing facilities.

Commissioner Priddy asked when this proposal would come back to Commissioners for final review.

Mr. Dutton responded that final statutory change language would be presented at the September Commission Meeting.

Executive Director Wiley advised Commissioners that if they directed staff to do so, this proposal could be modified to include the 24 hours of hunting. FWC would then hear public comment on this change in stakeholder meetings.

Mr. Dutton added that a major concern from the airboat hunters is that there may be restrictions placed on use of airboats at night since the hunting hours have been increased to allow harvesting during the day. This is a large concern for airboat users in specific areas of the state who prefer hunting at night.

Commissioner Roberts noted that the final proposed rule changes will be brought back to the Commission in June.

### Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bergeron to amend the proposal to increase the number of hunting hours to 24, seconded by Vice Chairman Yablonski and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendations as amended.

### Potential Expansion of Federal Dove Season

Mr. Jamie Fedderson of the Division of Hunting and Game Management presented this amendment to the potential expansion of the federal dove season.

#### Public Comment

No public comment

#### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy questioned the additional date of October 28<sup>th</sup>, stating that it seemed to be added out of place in that phase.

Mr. Fedderson replied that they added that day in an effort to be as equitable as possible throughout each of the three phases.

Executive Director Wiley commented that the extra day could be added in another place if directed by the Commission.

Ms. Eggeman responded that the feedback received from stakeholders was very supportive of the starting day on a Saturday. In order to equitably distribute the additional days, FWC staff worked backwards from the final day of the season which is January 15<sup>th</sup>. This allowed staff to build in extra days to each phase as fairly as possible.

Commissioner Priddy suggested moving the October 28<sup>th</sup> additional day to December 1<sup>st</sup> instead which would allow more time near the Thanksgiving holiday for these hunts to take place.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked why there were so many days added to the beginning of the first phase.

Mr. Fedderson responded that they worked diligently to keep the breaks between the phases and stakeholder requests favored adding additional days prior to the start of the season.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted that sometimes it gets warmer in the early part of the season and adding more days to that time may discourage hunters from going out.

Executive Director Wiley responded that it was a valid point, but this proposed change will allow a good opportunity for hunters to get out sooner, which was something expressed in stakeholder communication. He thanked Mr. Fedderson for stepping into this new role with the Division of Hunting and Game Management and for handling this process so efficiently.

#### Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Rivard with the amendment to move the October 28<sup>th</sup> additional day to December 1<sup>st</sup>, seconded by Vice Chairman Yablonski and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendations as amended.

#### Legislative and Budget Update

Ms. Jackie Fauls, Legislative Affairs Director, presented updates on legislation related to FWC during the 2014 Session.

Commissioner Priddy asked if FWC staff planned the Spring 2015 Commission meeting date to coincide with the Legislative Session.

Executive Director Wiley responded that FWC has made every effort to hold the Tallahassee area Commission Meeting when the Legislature is in Session.

Next, Ms. Charlotte Jerrett, Chief Financial Officer, presented updates on the status of the FWC Budget for the next fiscal year, being considered during the 2014 Session.

Executive Director Wiley noted that next year there will be a different amount of BP oil spill funds included in the budget depending on the projects that are funded through FWC.

### **Future Agenda Items**

Mr. Eric Sutton, Assistant Executive Director, reviewed the agenda items for the June 2014 Commission Meeting in Fort Myers, Florida.

- Budget workshop. Vice Chairman Yablonski has been selected as this year's budget liaison.
- Comprehensive overview of the Panther Management Program
- Commissioner Strategic Discussions:
  - Conservation Approaches to Private Lands
  - Innovative Approaches to Marine Fisheries Management
- Awards
  - Chairman Rodney Barreto Employee of the Year Award
  - Florida Guides Association Annual Awards
- Final rules based on direction from this Commission Meeting
- Update on Best Management Practices deadline extension (NOTE: postponed to future meeting)
- Imperiled Species Management Plan Update (NOTE: postponed to future meeting)

### **Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda**

The following individuals addressed the Commission:

Lyle McCandless addressed the Commission and affirmed the critical need to increase opportunities for youth to learn about wildlife and the natural environment.

Teresa Wineland with the Southeastern Dog Hunters Association addressed the Commission. Ms. Wineland highlighted her experiences with dog hunting in Florida and the passion of the members of this association.

Elam Stoltzfus, a filmmaker who documented the 2012 Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition from the Everglades National Park to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, addressed the Commission. He noted that in 2014, work will begin on a film to highlight the natural areas between Orlando and Pensacola and he looks forward to working with FWC during that time.

### **Commissioner Exchange**

Executive Director Wiley introduced Retired Army Colonel Mike Prendergast, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, who addressed the Commission and brought a special guest. Mr. Brent Whitman was introduced and spoke about organizing turkey hunts for veterans. Mr. Whitman's association, American Patriot Outfitters, has sponsored an all inclusive spring turkey hunt with three more events planned for this year. Mr. Whitman would like the opportunity to partner with FWC to provide additional opportunities.

Vice Chairman Yablonski suggested possibly coordinating a youth hunt and a veteran hunt together to help expand the educational experience.

Executive Director Wiley suggested that FWC staff coordinate with Mr. Whitman at the close of this meeting.

Commissioner Roberts stated that this was a really good meeting covering a range of topics, including the coexistence discussion and Red Snapper. He added that whoever was responsible for getting the special guests for this meeting deserves a special thanks.

Commissioner Priddy noted that she was impressed with how well FWC is represented in meetings throughout the Southeast United States and how well respected the agency is by other entities.

Commissioner Rivard thanked the stakeholders for their comments and appreciated the Commission Strategic Discussion.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked FWC staff and fellow Commissioners.

Vice Chairman Yablonski added that this meeting had a bit of everything across the board of the agency's responsibilities. Commissioners had to make some tough calls on protecting the resources. He thanked the Chairman for getting the strategic discussion rolling and also thanked the partners involved with the Florida Georgia Quail Coalition.

Chairman Corbett appreciated Commissioners taking a look at all the issues and working with staff on making the necessary changes for the benefit of the resources and to the public.

### **Commission Administrative Matters**

Chairman Corbett announced that the next regular Commission Meeting is scheduled for June 17 - 19, 2014 in Ft. Myers, Florida, commencing at 1:00 p.m. on June 17, and 8:30 am each day thereafter.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 11:43 a.m.

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Richard A. Corbett  
Chairman

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Nick Wiley  
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

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Lisa Zullo  
Commission Assistant