



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Legislative Affairs Office

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Summary of FWC Proposals for 2015 Session

1. **Modify Tarpon Tag Requirements**

This proposal would modify the tarpon tag requirements in part to reflect its management since mid-2013 as a catch-and-release only species, except when in pursuit of an International Game Fish Association (IGFA) record. The proposal eliminates the angler reporting requirements for the tarpon tag because with such limited harvest, the information is no longer critical and FWC can get the harvest information from IGFA. The proposal also repeals the requirement that Tax Collectors return their unused tarpon tags by Aug. 15 every year, and modifies the effective date of the tarpon tag to the calendar year, January to December. The tag is currently valid from July to June, which is in the middle of the height of the tarpon fishing season (summer). This change will allow the angler to acquire only one tarpon tag during the height of the tarpon fishing season. This proposal is supported by: Bonefish Tarpon Trust, Coastal Conservation Association, IGFA, and International Federation of Fly Fishers.

2. **Repeal Restricted Species Endorsement Regulations from Statute**

This proposal would repeal the Restricted Species Endorsement (RS) qualifications from statute. The Commission voted to adopt the RS regulations into rule in June 2014; the repeal of the statutory language would eliminate potential future conflicts should rule qualifications change. A commercial saltwater fisher must acquire an RS to commercially harvest and sell the 32 groups of species designated as “restricted” by FWC. The purpose of the RS is to help ensure the sustainability of the State’s most important commercially harvested species, and to ensure that the higher bag limits are being harvested for commercial purposes. At the request of the industry, the requirement to possess an RS in order to commercially fish such species would be retained in statute. This proposal is supported by: Organization Fishermen of Florida, Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen’s Association, and Shrimp Producers Association.

3. **Modify Life Jacket Language**

Life jackets are required for boating in Florida; however Florida law specifically requires life jackets to be worn when operating personal watercraft, for children younger than six, and for certain watersports such as skiing and tubing. Florida law also defers to U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets, specified by type, as the authorized safety equipment on Florida waters. This proposal would repeal language specifying the labeled “type codes” (I, II, III, IV, and V – type depends on usage, such as calm waters, offshore/rough waters, etc.) and replaces it with the phrase “used in accordance with the U.S. Coast Guard approval label”. The Coast Guard is in the process of eliminating the classification of life jackets by “type” in Federal code, classifying them instead based on their buoyancy, size, and intended use to make it easier for the public to understand. Modifying Florida law before the Federal code is changed (2016) will ensure that citizens will be legal using their life jackets with current labels, as well as the ones with updated labels. This proposal is supported by the Boating Advisory Council.