



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting
September 10 - 11
Kissimmee, 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 September 10-11, 2014, at the Embassy Suites Lake Buena Vista South, located at 4955 Kyngs Heath Drive, Kissimmee. Chairman Richard A. Corbett called the meeting to order with the following members in attendance:

Brian Yablonski, Vice Chairman, Tallahassee
Aliese Priddy, Immokalee

Bo Rivard, Panama City
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
Dr. Thomas Eason	Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Doc Kokol	Director, Community Relations
Jackie Fauls	Director, Legislative Affairs
Charlotte Jerrett	Chief Financial Officer
Melissa Recks	Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Martha Bademan	Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Scott Sanders	Director, Office of Conservation Planning Services
Harry Dutton	Alligator Management Program Coordinator

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

Meeting Opening

Chairman Corbett called the September 10-11, 2014 meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Mr. Chris Wynn, Southwest Regional Director, gave the invocation followed by Commissioner Roberts leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Corbett invited Vice Mayor Cheryl Grieb to address the Commission and welcome everyone to the City of Kissimmee.

Vice Chairman Yablonski recognized District Secretary Tracy Brooks from Senator Darren Soto's office.

Prosecutor of the Year Award

Mr. Bud Vielhauer, General Counsel, introduced the winner of the Prosecutor of the Year Award, Assistant State Attorney for Highlands County, Gary Ellis.

Presentation of Resolution Establishing the Lovett E. Williams, Jr. Wildlife Research Laboratory

Mr. Gil McRae, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, provided a brief background on the late Lovett E. Williams, Jr.

Dr. James Earl Kennamer was invited by Chairman Corbett to say a few words about Mr. Lovett E. Williams, Jr.

Mr. Nick Wiley, Executive Director, read comments from Dr. Franklin Percival with the University of Florida who worked closely with Mr. Lovett E. Williams, Jr.

Vice Chairman Yablonski read the resolution establishing the Lovett E. Williams, Jr. Wildlife Research Laboratory for the Commission's approval.

Adoption of Minutes

Upon a motion by Commissioner Rivard, seconded by Vice Chairman Yablonski and carried, the June 2014 minutes were approved as written.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Vice Chairman Yablonski and carried, to adopt the September 2014 Commission Meeting Agenda.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and carried, the September 2014 Consent Agenda was approved.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Wiley highlighted the following items from the report:

- Mr. Ron Taylor, biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute recently was awarded the American Fisheries Society William E. Ricker Resource Conservation Award.

- FWC was recognized for excellence in communications by receiving five awards from the Association for Conservation Information.
- FWC will host seven public workshops related to the Captive Wildlife rule review process.
- The Division of Law Enforcement will be engaging stakeholders through a series of public workshops related to the Anchoring and Mooring Pilot Program.
- FWC recently issued an executive order pertaining to Apalachicola Oyster harvest regulations.
- Currently the Quota Hunt Permit Program system is experiencing issues with re-issuing returned quota hunt permits. Because of these issues, FWC will move away from the first-come, first-served method, in favor of a random-draw process.
- Mr. Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Mr. James Kurth, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, recently visited south Florida and met with staff and Commissioners to discuss efforts to prioritize conservation lands and also Everglades restoration.
- Special Recognition of Ms. Marcia Crawford who began her career with the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission on September 13, 1974, and works out of the Northeast Regional Office.

Chairman Corbett brought up the extreme complexity of this agency. He noted how well the Governor has done in appointing Commissioners with different perspectives yet a common goal related to fish and wildlife in the State of Florida. He highlighted the recent appointment of the new Commissioner, Mr. Richard Hanas, based out of Oviedo, Florida. He commented that Commissioner Hanas had a previously scheduled engagement and could not attend this meeting, but he looks forward to participating at the November meeting.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Corbett reminded the Commission of the goals set forth over the last year on proactive policy discussion. He asked Mr. Eric Sutton, Assistant Executive Director, to provide a general outline of the discussions and the strategic areas that Commission staff will bring back for specific policy direction and consideration.

Mr. Sutton provided a review of the strategic topics the Commission identified for discussion and also proposed timelines for bringing these issues forward for the Commission over the next year.

Vice Chairman Yablonski thanked the Chairman for bringing the strategic overview to the Commission. He highlighted Economic Development as an important item to think about in this process. He suggested inviting Florida's Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Gray Swoope, to a future meeting and working alongside visiting companies to highlight the wonderful natural habitats and opportunities that Florida has to offer. He also reminded everyone of the importance of bringing these strategic items based on geography in relation to the specific topic.

Commissioner Rivard noted that the agency could develop a package of information and details of Florida Fish and Wildlife aspects that could assist in attracting businesses to the State of Florida.

Commissioner Priddy commented on the need to redirect some efforts towards serving the changing demographics of the state of Florida. She added that the availability of information on rules and regulations in other languages is a priority in inviting more citizens to participate in the opportunities to experience fish and wildlife resources throughout the state.

Executive Director Wiley added that our success rate is reliant upon the relationships established and communication efforts geared toward all the Citizens of Florida, which will in turn help the fish and wildlife species, as well as influence the desire for additional demographics to be employed with the agency.

Vice Chairman Yablonski added the unique perspective of the conservation efforts by current fishermen and hunters. The funds provided by license sales and the general mindset of most fishermen and hunters help to drive the conservation of fish and wildlife resources throughout the country and the state.

Commissioner Roberts noted that conflict management is a key in the success of promoting fish and wildlife in the State of Florida. He recognized that FWC is moving in the right direction with looking at the strategic objectives far into the future. Providing the opportunity to participate in outdoor activities to families is an important message to convey. Also,

using social media to reach the younger generations and generate interest in being involved with the outdoors has to be a priority.

Commissioner Rivard thanked the Chairman again for bringing this discussion up. He thanked staff for taking these discussions and ideas and planning to execute the important pieces to ensure that the appropriate actions can occur. In addition, he commented that we need to be involved in the discussions regarding all the arenas surrounding population growth over the next several decades. Being involved with the land management councils, education councils, tourist development councils, etc. to ensure FWC's message is conveyed.

Assistant Executive Director Sutton added that staff work diligently in bringing these topics to the Commissioner for Discussion, and upon conclusion of this meeting, staff will be working to bring forward follow-up discussions and actions as directed by the Commission.

Strategic Overview – Running the Business

Chairman Corbett introduced the next agenda item which details how the agency plans to run the business in conjunction with the direction provided on strategic initiatives and policy focal areas by the Commission.

Assistant Executive Director Sutton provided a snapshot of running the business at FWC, and the recent efforts to review the major activities of the agency to apply risk management principles to determine where concentrated efforts should be directed for continuous improvement and efficiencies.

2015 Budget Requests

Ms. Charlotte Jerrett, Chief Financial Officer, presented the 2015 Legislative Budget Requests. She highlighted the timelines for submitting these requests. She thanked Vice Chairman Yablonski for working with staff over the last several months on this topic.

Chairman Corbett commented that the agency has done a great job at trying to maintain old vehicles and vessels for use. He asked the Executive Director if we will need to submit this request in the future.

Executive Director Wiley responded that the specific guidelines for Law Enforcement vehicles and vessels to maintain officer safety and security are strictly adhered to. He noted the requests coming forward today are all Law Enforcement requests based on those guidelines. While there are other needs within the agency fleet to replace vehicles, we would need to complete a current analysis before we present any sort of amendment to request additional non-Law Enforcement vehicles or vessels.

Chairman Corbett responded that once the assessment is completed on non-Law Enforcement vehicles and vessels, the agency bring forward the requests to replace these fleet items as this agency has always been very efficient in utilizing vehicles and vessels until no longer possible.

Ms. Jerrett presented the 5% Budget Reduction information. Executive Director Wiley commented that the Legislature requires the 5% reduction proposals from all state agencies every year.

Commissioner Priddy asked if FWC would revisit the budget if Amendment 1 passes.

Executive Director Wiley responded that if Amendment 1 passes, staff will bring some information back to the Commission for discussion and will need to re-evaluate the current year and future budget requests. He also noted that the Legislature will determine how to apply any changes if Amendment 1 passes.

Commission Action

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

2015 Legislative Requests

Ms. Jackie Fauls, Legislative Affairs Director, presented three of the 2015 Session Legislative Proposals. She noted that additional proposals will be presented at the November 2014 Commission Meeting for consideration.

Commission Action

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

Agency Workplan

Mr. David Arnold, Rules Administrator with the Office of Policy and Accountability, presented the Agency Workplan for 2015.

Executive Director Wiley commented that the agency workplan helps guide the agenda items for upcoming Commission Meetings. He asked Commissioners to provide feedback to staff in order to move forward with the processes involved in bringing these items for discussion and action.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked how the strategic discussion items are intermingled into the workplan. He suggested creating a checklist which contains not only the workplan items, but also Strategic Planning and Policy Focal Area items and contains any action items that were identified during the previous Commission Meetings.

Assistant Executive Director Sutton confirmed that these lists are currently separate items, but noted that he will coordinate with David to create an all inclusive checklist including action items.

Chairman Corbett asked Assistant Executive Director Sutton to send this newly created checklist out to each of the Commissioners for review at the November Commission Meeting.

Commission Action

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

Proposed Rule Amendments for Taking Game and Alligators

Ms. Diane Eggeman, Director of the Division of Hunting and Game Management, presented proposed rule amendments for taking game and alligators.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Knox Williams with the American Suppressor Association addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Sean Brown addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Buck Holly, owner and operator of C&H Precision Weapons, addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Lyle McCandless, President of Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance addressed the Commission. He commented that approval of the suppressor rule change will provide a direct advantage to youth hunting and recommended approval of staff recommendations.

Mr. Chuck O'Neil, Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee for the League of Women Voters of Florida, addressed the Commission. He voiced opposition to suppressor use for hunting.

Mr. Newton Cook, Executive Director of the United Waterfowlers of Florida and Member of the Board of Directors Future of Hunting in Florida and Chair of the Recreation Group for the South Florida Water Management District, addressed the Commission. He noted no opposition with the rule changes as proposed.

Mr. John Rosier, representing the Broward Airboat Club and Fulltrack Conservation Club of Dade County, addressed the Commission. He mentioned his comments were related to Alligator permitting, and it was suggested that he bring this up for discussion during the public comment on items not on the agenda.

Ms. Patricia Brigham, State Chair of the Gun Safety Committee with the League of Women Voters of Florida, addressed the Commission. She voiced concern over the safety of suppressors.

Mr. Robert Snyder addressed the Commission in support of removing the restrictions related to suppressors.

Mr. Bill George addressed the Commission with no issue related to the suppressor rule. He commented on the rule change related to private lands alligator programs and opposed moving forward with that portion of this agenda item. His concerns are related to the documentation required to be submitted with this rule change that are then made to be a public record. Due to the competitive nature of the alligator egg collection, there are concerns with making these documents required and public record.

Ms. Katherine McGill addressed the Commission and requested additional review by staff of the suppressor issue before approval.

Mr. Walter Fussell addressed the Commission with support of staff recommendation.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked about the private lands alligator program application process. She requested clarification on the requirement of documents becoming public records. Instead of requiring a lease, is it possible to allow an authorization letter from the landowner?

Ms. Eggeman responded that the landowner could complete the application (or a designee) which would not require the lease to be provided.

Commissioner Rivard asked about the other states that currently allow suppressors being used in hunting. Are there any documents that point towards higher numbers of hunting accidents due to the suppressors?

Ms. Eggeman responded that there is no data that shows an increase in hunting accidents in relation to suppressor use while hunting.

Vice Chairman Yablonski commented that suppressors are currently allowed in Florida for use of hunting on shotguns, and has a high level of regulation in preparation of owning these devices. He added that while a suppressor assists in muffling the noise of the gunshot, it doesn't completely remove the sound of the gunshot.

Commission Action

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

Wildlife Best Management Practices (BMP's) for Agriculture

Mr. Scott Sanders, Director of the Office of Conservation Planning Services, presented a proposed draft rule which would require Commission staff to work cooperatively with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, landowners, and other stakeholders to legislatively authorize, develop, and adopt BMPs to protect wildlife species by November 2014.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Lyle McCandless addressed the Commission. He commented that he was glad to see the agencies coordinating on these types of projects and supports staff recommendation.

Mr. Ernie Barnett, Executive Director of the Florida Land Council, addressed the Commission. The Land Council strongly supports staff recommendation and thanked staff for moving forward with this process. He brought up crop conversions as an issue and would like to work with staff to discuss options and alternatives. He added that the timing of this new rule may create an inadvertent lapse in coverage for landowners and suggested that the Commission provide direction to staff to allow a grace period.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Rivard to amend staff recommendations to allow additional coordination with staff on allowing a grace period for landowners who are currently complying with water quality BMP's and need time to submit a notice of intent to implement wildlife BMP's, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the Commission approved the amended staff recommendations.

Specific Regulations for Wildlife Management Areas- Northwest Region

Mr. Steve Shea, Northwest Regional Director, presented a final rule which would require that all dogs used to pursue or take deer, fox or coyote must be equipped and monitored with electronic tracking and control devices in that portion of the dog hunt area east of Belandville Road.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Teresa Wineland with the Southeastern Dog Hunters Association addressed the Commission with full support of staff recommendation. She added a request for FWC to coordinate with other entities in opening roads in the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area to allow hunters the ability to recall dogs effectively.

Mr. Lyle McCandless addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Commission Action

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

General Counsel's Report

Mr. Vielhauer, provided an update on current legal issues being handled at the Commission.

Red Tide Update

Mr. Gil McRae, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute provided an update on the red tide bloom in the Gulf of Mexico that began in late July.

Special Recognition

Mr. Tom Champeau, Director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries, introduced two high-school anglers who recently won a high school fishing world championship tournament. Mr. Champeau also highlighted the partnerships with entities which support these types of student angler programs.

Florida Youth Conservation Center Network (FYCCN) Update

Ms. Rae Waddell, Director of the Florida Youth Conservation Center Network, provided an update on youth conservation center network construction projects, along with a review of the summer camp program and a report on a youth advisory council meeting.

Executive Director Wiley mentioned the efforts of the agency toward realigning resources towards the FYCCN.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Newton Cook addressed the Commission and recognized the tremendous effort of staff in regards to this effort. He added that a group of duck hunters have volunteered to work with staff to schedule classes for youth at these conservation centers.

Mr. Todd Hallman with the FSCA addressed the Commission and provided additional details on the Everglades Youth Conservation Camp improvements. He thanked staff and Commissioners for their efforts.

Mr. Brett Boston with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida addressed the Commission and invited Osceola County Commissioner Michael Harford to address the Commission with a positive announcement regarding an outreach campaign highlighting outdoor activities and facilities in the local area.

Social Media

Mr. Doc Kokol, Director of Community Relations, presented information on the efforts currently underway at the agency related to Social Media as an outreach tool.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked about the Facebook two-way communication item highlighted in the presentation. She asked how individuals ask questions using this social media tool and how agency staff addresses those questions.

Mr. Kokol responded that staff works to answer these questions as soon as possible with the goal of responding within 24 hours.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted that social media is youth driven and asked if there was a way to recruit youth who tweet and generate buzz on some of the messaging the agency is trying to get out. Also, is the messaging of the right caliber for the younger generations?

Mr. Kokol responded that the Youth Advisory Council may be a good avenue for getting more youth involved and interested in promoting the message of FWC. He also noted that we need to continue to find methods to utilize technology to get younger generations outdoors and involved in conservation.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Bill George commented that FWC does a great job on the social media aspect of outreach and education. He commented that the GovDelivery system is great and thinks that it does a wonderful job in engaging the public on aspects of the agency.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

The following individuals addressed the Commission on items not on the agenda:

Mr. Lyle McCandless addressed the Commission. He brought to staff's attention a recent sighting of panther kittens and stated that he would coordinate with staff for follow-up on this. He thanked Mr. Larry Williams for adding a hunter to the Florida Statewide Panther Team. Finally, he noted issues with communication between Deer Management internal FWC staff and the Deer Management TAG Team. He asked for the Commission to review the deer TAG program to see if it is relevant in gathering the data needed.

Mr. Newton Cook addressed the Commission with an update on the recent Waterfowl Summit.

Mr. John Rosier addressed the Commission commenting on the alligator hunt permitting system errors. The current system is not working and he suggested changes to allow users a better opportunity to get the first choice of permits. He noted that there is a scheduled Bear Management Stakeholder Unit Meeting which conflicts with this Commission Meeting. He asked for staff coordination so that the public does not have to choose between two important FWC meetings.

Mr. Todd Hallman addressed the Commission and provided support on the Addition Lands agenda item scheduled to be discussed during tomorrow's portion of the meeting since he will not be able to attend. He added that his organization has teamed up with Seasons of Hope to coordinate hunts for children with terminal illnesses. He noted he is working with staff to create more opportunities to allow these types of hunts to be organized. Finally, he stated that the fees required for a youth to participate in an alligator harvest are ridiculous. He asked the Commission to look at possible changes to these fee requirements.

Ms. Kathy Stearns with Dade City's Wild Things addressed the Commission with several concerns related to Captive Wildlife permitting and public meetings.

Ms. Rachel Arnott addressed the Commission with concerns regarding Captive Wildlife inspections for her small business. She requested clarification as a permit holder so that she can continue to run her small business.

Ms. Joan Galvin addressed the Commission regarding the Captive Wildlife rules for permit holders. She invited the Commissioners to learn more about the stakeholders of Captive Wildlife permits. She will send additional information to get out to some of the facilities in Polk County.

Mr. Bill George addressed the Commission regarding the errors in the alligator permit licensing system. He suggested a group of individuals get together to come up with possible solutions to the current issues with this system.

Mr. Byron Maharrey of the Everglades Coordinating Council addressed the Commission. He noted support of the alligator permit third draw being a random selection instead of a first come first serve basis. He also requested additional attention be focused on Chronic Wasting Disease.

Mr. Anthony Alaburda III addressed the Commission regarding Shark Fishing off the Atlantic Coast near Melbourne Beach. He commented that there have been no instances of shark bites near their location of shark fishing.

Mr. Anthony Alaburda Sr. addressed the Commission regarding Shark Fishing near Melbourne Beach and echoed the comments of the previous speaker.

Ms. Kimberly Wysong with Pinellas Park addressed the Commission regarding Captive Wildlife permits. She suggested having multiple permit holders per facility which would increase the fees raised for revenues related to fish and wildlife conservation.

Ms. Lorin Howells with the Simian Society Chapter 73 addressed the Commission regarding Captive Wildlife permits.

Ms. Pam Seaton addressed the Commission regarding Captive Wildlife. She requested advance notice of eight weeks regarding the upcoming workshops in order to plan and coordinate time off from work to participate.

Mr. Chuck Echineque addressed the Commission regarding issues with the quota hunt permitting system. He suggested streamlining the process and including preference points for waterfowl and alligator hunt permits. He voiced concerns about alligator helper license fees being the same for residents and non-residents.

Recess Wednesday's Portion of the Meeting

Vice Chairman Yablonski adjourned the meeting at 4:11 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, September 11, 2014.

Thursday, September 11, Reconvene

Chairman Corbett reconvened the meeting at 8:44 a.m.

The Commission observed a moment of silence at 8:46 a.m. in honor of those individuals who lost their lives on September 11, 2011, in New York City, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

Specific Regulations for Wildlife Management Areas - South Region

Mr. Don Coyner, Section Leader within the Division of Hunting and Game Management, presented a proposed final rule which would implement hunting on Addition Lands consistent with the Final Hunting Management Plan/Environmental Assessment for the Big Cypress National Preserve.

Chairman Corbett and Executive Director Wiley recognized Superintendent Pedro Ramos with Big Cypress National Preserve, and thanked him for attending the Commission Meeting for this final rule. He was invited to address the Commission.

Superintendent Ramos thanked the Commission for the invitation to be involved in the meeting related to this final rule.

Commissioner Priddy commented that with the help of Superintendent Ramos, the original intent of the National Preserve in allowing different opportunities compared to a National Park haven't been forgotten.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted that this item was one of the first items he remembers coming forward at the beginning of his appointment to the Commission. He added that it is great to see this come to a final rule for the Commission's review.

Executive Director Wiley thanked the stakeholders who have been involved with this process over the many years.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Pete Quasius with Audubon of the Western Everglades addressed the Commission. He commented that these types of opportunities are more about access. He voiced support for this final rule.

Mr. Frank Denninger with the Jetport Conservation and Recreation Club addressed the Commission. He thanked everyone involved who contributed to this process being completed.

Mr. Newton Cook addressed the Commission. He thanked the Big Cypress National Preserve staff for their efforts over the last few years.

Mr. Robert Andreu, President of the Southwest Florida Outdoorsman Association, addressed the Commission. He was supportive of this final rule and requested additional access.

Mr. Matthew Schwartz with the South Florida Wildlands Association addressed the Commission. He spoke in opposition of this final rule. He noted that the Addition Lands should be prohibited from hunting use due to major Panther habitat and other wildlife habitat reliance.

Mr. Byron Maharrey addressed the Commission. He thanked FWC and the National Park Service staff who have been working on this process over the last 15 years. He asked the Commission to approve this final rule and continue working on reasonable access to this land.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked about the current hunting framework. She confirmed that these lands are closed to hunting more than half of the year. She also noted that Everglades National Park which is just south of the Preserve is currently closed to hunting and includes over one million acres. She also commented on the panther population aspect of these lands.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Yablonski on behalf of Commissioner Bergeron, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendations.

Goliath Grouper Staff Report

Ms. Jessica McCawley, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, and Mr. Gil McRae, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, presented information on the biology and status of goliath grouper. Results from a University of Florida study of stakeholder views of goliath grouper were also presented by Dr. Kai Lorenzen.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Pete Quasius with the Audubon Society addressed the Commission. He commented that the science is important and supported bringing the 2015 stock assessment results back to the Commission in September of 2015.

Captain Pat Kelly with the Florida Guides Association addressed the Commission and provided his opinion that Goliath Grouper are abundant in the waters surrounding the State of Florida. He stated his support for the current research being done on goliath grouper, but recommended the creation of a tag or limited harvest to get better data.

Mr. Chris Koenig with Florida State University addressed the Commission. He provided a handout to the Commission for their review with information on the mercury content of goliath groupers. He stated that adult goliath grouper likely contain too much mercury to be consumed. He also commented on the ecological and economical value of goliath grouper.

Commissioner Priddy asked about length to weight ratios for goliath grouper in relation to the data provided by Mr. Koenig.

Mr. Bill Parks addressed the Commission. He noted that some of the conflict between fishermen and goliath grouper relates to advancements in technology, such as GPS. He suggested that the Commission begin a study related to genetics.

Mr. Walt Stearns with the Underwater Journal addressed the Commission. He noted that goliath grouper as a species is a much bigger problem if you look at the decline of goliath throughout its range. He noted that the spawning aggregations in Florida are unique and should be protected.

Mr. Gerald Carroll with the Jupiter Dive Center addressed the Commission. He supported bringing the 2015 stock assessment results back to the Commission. He noted the economic value of goliath grouper left in the water.

Mr. Newton Cook addressed the Commission. He noted that single-species management can result in unintended consequences for other species.

Mr. Bob Harris representing the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) addressed the Commission. He stated DEMA's support for waiting until the next goliath grouper stock assessment before making any management changes.

Mr. Byron Maharrey with the Everglades Coordinating Council addressed the Commission. He mentioned the potential issues with single-species management. He proposed a limited harvest with a slot limit to reduce goliath grouper populations in areas where the species is overabundant.

Mr. Brett Fitzgerald with the Snook and Gamefish Foundation addressed the Commission. He noted how more data from the recreational community would improve the science behind management.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett stated that goliath grouper would be brought before the Commission again in September 2015 following the completion of the latest stock assessment for the species that will be conducted by FWC.

Commissioner Priddy asked why scientists don't know if the goliath grouper stock has recovered after more than 24 years of total protection.

Mr. McRae responded that rebuilding timelines are tied to the lifespan of the species. He stated that since goliath are suspected to live to at least 50 years old, the recovery timeline is longer than many other species. In addition, most of the current goliath grouper stock is comprised of younger fish that do not produce as many young during reproduction as older fish.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Update

Ms. Martha Bademan, Section Leader with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, provided a report on actions taken by the GMFMC at its June 23-27 and August 25-29 meetings, and actions anticipated to be taken at its October 20-24 meeting in Mobile, AL. Staff also presented public input received at FWC Gulf recreational red snapper management workshops held in July and August. Staff requested direction on red snapper management options including: sector separation, regional management, a for-hire IFQ-type program, and inter-sector trading.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Melissa Thompson, Assistant to Congressman Southerland, was invited to address the Commission. She presented information that was also presented at the recent Gulf Council meeting. She commented on Congressman Southerland's desire to manage recreational fisheries different from commercial fisheries and his desire to see a pilot program in the Gulf of Mexico for a six-month recreational red snapper season with a two-fish bag limit. She commented that NOAA

Fisheries needs to improve recreational data collection. She also commented that Congressman Southerland's office opposes sector separation and inter-sector trading.

Captain Pat Kelly with the Florida Guides Association addressed the Commission in opposition to sector separation.

Mr. Billy Archer with the Charter Fisherman Association addressed the Commission in support of sector separation and provided a handout to the Commissioners for review.

Mr. Dennis O'Hern, President of Fishing Rights Alliance, addressed the Commission. He encouraged the FWC to oppose sector separation and inter-sector trading.

Mr. Gary Jarvis, President of the Destin Charter Boat Association (DCBA), addressed the Commission by stating the DCBA's support of sector separation.

Mr. Steven Hunsucker, a federally-permitted for-hire captain, addressed the Commission in favor of sector separation.

Mr. Brad Gorst, a federally-permitted for-hire captain, addressed the Commission in support of sector separation.

Mr. Trip Aukeman with the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) of Florida addressed the Commission in support of regional management and would like to see the Gulf States manage fisheries such as red snapper. He also voiced CCA's opposition to sector separation.

Mr. Ted Forsgren with CCA of Florida addressed the Commission in opposition to sector separation.

Ms. Pam Anderson with the PCBA, NACO, and Bay County Chamber of Commerce member of the Government Affairs Committee addressed the Commission in opposition to sector separation, catch shares, and inter-sector trading.

Mr. Byron Maharrey addressed the Commission in opposition to sector separation.

Mr. TJ Marshall with the Ocean Conservancy addressed the Commission in support of sector separation. He also noted the potential benefits of sector separation with regional management of red snapper in place.

Mr. Bob Gill of Crystal River addressed the Commission and brought up the issue of the increasing amount of anglers catching larger red snapper and reaching the quota faster each year. He stated that until that problem is addressed there will not be an adequate recreational red snapper season.

Mr. Eric Alexander, a federally-permitted for-hire captain, addressed the Commission in support of sector separation as the only option that would assist his business in providing trips to individuals out of Naples where he is based.

Mr. Tom Marvel, a federally-permitted for-hire captain, addressed the Commission in support of sector separation.

Mr. Van Hubbard representing Save the Tarpon addressed the Commission. He noted the importance of using stakeholder input from the Gulf recreational red snapper management workshops when making management decisions.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Roberts asked for Ms. Bademan to explain the recreational allocation percentages and season dates per sector (private versus federally-permitted for-hire) under a sector separation scenario. He commented that it is difficult for the Commission to make a decision on regional management if a decision on sector separation has not been made yet by the Gulf Council.

Executive Director Wiley responded that sector separation and regional management are connected in a way and the Commissioners need to discuss both these options.

Commissioner Roberts voiced his opposition to sector separation and noted that sector separation is not science-based management and not the best way to manage the red snapper fishery.

Commissioner Rivard commented on FWC's mission of protecting the resource and managing it for its long-term well-being and the benefit of people. He noted the improvements in the resource since the rebuilding plan began and stated that instead of fighting over sector separation, the fight should be about getting more fishing opportunities for all recreational anglers. He voiced opposition to sector separation.

Vice Chairman Yablonski spoke in opposition of sector separation based on the lack of consensus from the charter industry and the loss of fishing opportunities for private anglers. He suggested that the Commission write a letter to the Council regarding the serious concerns the Commission has related to sector separation based on the lack of consensus from the for-hire industry and the unacceptable outcome for private recreational anglers.

Commissioner Roberts supported the proposal of Vice Chairman and added that the Commission should continue to consider regional management but cannot fully support that option at this point due to a lack of information. He stated that the Commission does not support sector separation as currently proposed.

Commissioner Priddy commented that the letter from the Commission needs to convey the bigger problem related to the recreational management of red snapper. She stated that the states are forced into micro-management on these issues instead of addressing bigger problems related to recreational data collection to inform management decisions. She added that the message of getting better data should be the main point that is communicated in the letter to the Council. She added that the red snapper situation has become a fight over scraps when there is a full buffet available and wanted that message conveyed in the letter to the Council.

Commission Action

The Commission in conjunction with the Executive Director will draft a letter to the Council with comments stating: opposition to sector separation, consideration of regional management, and the need to address issues such as red snapper recreational data collection.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Update

Ms. McCawley reported on SAFMC actions anticipated for the upcoming SAFMC meeting on September 15-19 in Charleston, SC. Topics include: various snapper grouper species, dolphin, wahoo, and mackerel. Staff requested direction on whether FWC would consider delegation of yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and the recreational harvest of black grouper to the State of Florida. Staff also requested direction on recreational management of snowy grouper and golden tilefish in Atlantic state waters.

Vice Chairman Yablonski recognized the attendance of Ms. Jennifer Marquez, District Secretary to State Representative Ricardo Rangel, representing the Kissimmee Area.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Trip Aukeman addressed the Commission supporting the FWC accepting delegation of management on yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper. He also thanked staff for their work on the issue of bringing harvested dolphin and wahoo back as fillets from the Bahamas.

Commission Discussion

The Commissioners did not give staff specific direction at this time, but gave staff the ability to pursue management options for delegation of species and recreational management of snowy grouper and golden tilefish that staff deemed appropriate to the State of Florida.

American Eel Regulations

Mr. Tom Champeau, Director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management, and Mr. Jim Estes, Deputy Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, presented a proposed draft rule which would establish bag limits on recreational harvest and size limits on the recreational and commercial harvest of American eels.

Commission Action

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

Commercial Shellfish Harvest

Ms. Melissa Recks, Section Leader with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, presented a proposed draft rule which would require commercial oyster and hard clam harvesters to complete an annual training course outlining proper harvest and handling practices for shellfish and to obtain a no-cost Shellfish endorsement in association with their Saltwater Products License (SPL) before harvesting oysters or hard clams for commercial purposes or selling these species of shellfish. This new endorsement would be required beginning July 1, 2015.

Commission Action

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

Future Agenda Items

Mr. Eric Sutton, Assistant Executive Director, reviewed potential agenda items for the upcoming November 2014 Commission Meeting which will be held in Key Largo, Florida.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

The following individuals registered to speak on items not listed on the agenda:

Vice Chairman Yablonski brought to the Commissioner's attention an issue with a navigational marker known as "Bent Range" which has been in place for many years and has created artificial habitat for many species. Current plans by the Coast Guard call for the removal of this marker and local government entities have requested assistance from the Commission in support of keeping this marker in place. He presented a Resolution to the Commission which shows support for this marker remaining in place and it was approved by the Commission.

Vice Chairman Yablonski invited the Mayor of the Town of Melbourne Beach to address the Commission regarding an issue currently occurring in his area of the state.

Mayor Simmons proposed that FWC adopt prohibitions against shark fishing near public beaches.

Vice Chairman Yablonski commented that Mayor Simmons should work with Ms. McCawley with the Division of Marine Fisheries to determine available options to bring forward to a future meeting.

Mr. Joe Guthrie with the Florida Wildlife Corridor addressed the Commission with an update on the Wildlife Corridor excursion currently planned. He invited the Commissioners to participate in this trip if available and interested.

Mr. Terry Segraves with the Osceola County Department of Tourism addressed the Commission. He voiced concern regarding a decline in water quality of lakes in Osceola County. He asked the Commission to protect the waterways for future generations.

Mr. Jerry Sansom addressed the Commission regarding a biological review of the Indian River Lagoon. He asked Executive Director Wiley if the Commission planned to bring an update on this topic.

Executive Director Wiley responded with the current plans along with other agencies and suggested Mr. Sansom coordinates with Mr. McRae on future actions related to the Indian River Lagoon.

Mr. Dean Puller addressed the Commission regarding the quality of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes.

Mr. Bob Harris addressed the Commission regarding chumming and baiting sharks near shore and near the public. He referenced a meeting with FWC several years ago with the Diving Community regarding Shark Feeding that is similar to the request by Mayor Simmons. He commented that FWC needs to be consistent in these decisions.

Mr. Justin Grubich with the Pew Charitable Trusts addressed the Commission in thanks for approving the draft rule on eels earlier in the day.

Commissioner Exchange

Commissioner Roberts thanked the staff for providing this opportunity and the information to assist the Commissioners in making these difficult decisions. He thanked his fellow Commissioners in being involved with these decisions and working diligently to come up with the best solution to some of these issues.

Commissioner Rivard thanked everyone who came and spoke on the items for this meeting.

Commissioner Priddy commented that this Commission is responsible for a magnitude of issues, and at the meetings throughout the state, the Commission has opportunities to see firsthand examples of rules and regulations related to FWC. She thanked Disney's Animal Kingdom for the facilities tour that occurred during this Commission Meeting.

Vice Chairman Yablonski thanked everyone including the City of Kissimmee and agency staff who worked to put this meeting together.

Adjournment

Vice Chairman Yablonski adjourned the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

Richard A. Corbett
Chairman

Nick Wiley
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

Lisa Zullo
Commission Assistant