



# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting  
April 14-16, 2015  
Tallahassee, 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 14-16, 2015, at the Alfred Lawson Jr. Multipurpose Center, located at 1800 Wahnish Way, Tallahassee. Chairman Richard A. Corbett called the meeting to order with the following members in attendance:

Ronald Bergeron, Fort Lauderdale  
Aliese Priddy, Immokalee  
Brian Yablonski, Tallahassee

Bo Rivard, Panama City  
Chuck Roberts, Tallahassee  
Richard Hanas, Oviedo

Senior and Presenting Staff:

Nick Wiley	Executive Director
Eric Sutton	Assistant Executive Director
Bud Vielhauer	General Counsel
Colonel Curtis Brown	Director, Division of Law Enforcement
Ernie Marks	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
Jackie Fauls	Director, Legislative Affairs
Cindy Hoffman	Director, Human Resources
Doc Kokol	Director, Office of Strategic Initiatives
Melissa Recks	Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Martha Bademan	Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Greg Hagan	Northern Bobwhite Coordinator
Bill Cline	Section Leader, Division of Hunting and Game Management
Scott Sanders	Director, Office of Conservation Planning Services
Kellie Ralston	Analyst, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

There were 65 individuals registered to speak to the Commission during the three-day meeting.

Meeting Opening

Chairman Corbett called the April 14-16, 2015 meeting to order at 1:39 p.m.

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

Mr. Tom Champeau, Director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management, gave the invocation then Vice Chairman Yablonski led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Special Recognition**

Chairman Corbett invited Dr. Elmira Mangum, President of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), to address the Commission.

Dr. Mangum welcomed the Commission to the FAMU campus, specifically the Alfred Lawson Jr. Multipurpose Center. She provided details on the accomplishments of the FAMU staff and students, and commented on areas that could be of mutual benefit to FAMU and FWC regarding diversity.

Next, Chairman Corbett introduced two senior representatives from partner agencies, Secretary Jon Steverson from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and Director Jim Karels from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) Florida Forest Service. He invited them each to address the Commission.

Secretary Steverson thanked the Commission for the invitation to speak and commented on the wonderful opportunities he has been a part of working in partnership with FWC both in past and current positions.

Executive Director Wiley added that FWC and DEP work very closely together on many tasks and it would not be possible to meet the goals and objectives of either agency without such great coordination.

Director Karels addressed the Commission and relayed a message of thanks from Commissioner Adam Putnam, Commissioner of DACS. He noted several important projects that FWC and DACS Florida Forest Service coordinate on to ensure that the State of Florida is at a high level of success for conservation and habitat management.

Chairman Corbett echoed the importance of partnerships to increase the opportunities for the citizens and visitors of Florida.

Vice Chairman Yablonski commented on the remarkable professional strengths of Director Karels highlighted by his selection by the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service to lead an investigation into the national tragedy of 19 wild land firefighters being killed in a backcountry fire in Arizona a few years ago. He thanked Director Karels for his efforts on this.

Commissioner Hanas applauded the efforts of all the partner agencies.

Commissioner Bergeron noted that the communication between the partner agencies creates a better environment for the benefit of people and the wildlife of the State of Florida.

### **Strategic Discussion Follow-Up**

Economic Development- Mr. Eric Sutton, Assistant Executive Director, introduced the special guest speaker for this agenda item, Mr. Jesse Panuccio, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO).

Executive Director. Panuccio addressed the Commission and noted the efforts of the DEO to assist in improving the economy in the State of Florida. He mentioned the top occupations in demand for Florida and noted a current action at DEO to assist small and rural communities in strengthening their economy with small projects that kick-start growth in these areas.

### **Commission Discussion**

Executive Director Wiley thanked Executive Director Panuccio for attending the meeting and highlighting a few actions that DEO and FWC can work together on.

Vice Chairman Yablonski commented that a lot of recovery growth is not necessarily organic and that it takes a lot of work from DEO and other agencies. He asked about the Governor attending the next ICAST meeting in Orlando, and about FWC working to get meetings with some of the CEOs of these large manufacturing companies to pitch the appeal of moving their businesses to Florida. He also noted the pitch should include quality of life for employees of those businesses and either the Executive Director or a Commissioner would be willing to help make that pitch.

Executive Director Panuccio noted that certain situations would benefit from this type of inclusive trip and he would be happy to relay this information to Enterprise Florida who is responsible for meeting with these businesses. He confirmed that he would work with the Governor's Office on the request to have Governor Scott attend the next ICAST meeting.

Commissioner Priddy commented that as the population grows there is a higher demand placed on infrastructure and services. FWC must acknowledge the challenges in managing fish and wildlife resources in relation to the increases in population throughout the state.

Commissioner Bergeron applauded the Governor and his team in the efforts of economic growth in the State of Florida.

Chairman Corbett thanked DEO for the programs in reaching out to the small and rural communities in Florida.

Increasing Workforce Diversity- Ms. Cindy Hoffman, Director of Human Resources, presented information to the Commission on FWC initiatives to increase workforce diversity.

#### Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett thanked Ms. Hoffman for the presentation.

Executive Director Wiley requested additional guidance from the Commission on any efforts they see beneficial to our current efforts in increasing diversity in the agency.

Chairman Corbett commented that the pay scale of the Federal Government may be one negative aspect that would prevent the minority professional from joining a conservation based organization such as FWC right out of college.

Commissioner Priddy asked about the Law Enforcement aspect of recruitment related to diversity. She wanted to know if it is important to have experience with hunting and fishing in order to become an FWC Officer.

Colonel Curtis Brown responded that anyone who is interested in becoming an FWC officer can go through training to learn the important aspects of enforcing the rules of this agency. Regardless of your experience or background with hunting and fishing, the training courses help recruits learn the specifics of enforcing rules related to fish and wildlife.

Chairman Corbett asked how we escalate coordination with identified partners in expanding conservation to increase diversity of the agency in future years.

Colonel Brown responded that the agency needs to do a better job recruiting individuals who have the passion for the outdoors and nature and discussed the difficulty in competing with the Federal pay scale.

Vice Chairman Yablonski welcomed Ms. Hoffman and thanked her for the presentation. He noted that pay should not be a part of this discussion because it is not a major player in diversity. He added that it takes a lot of work and effort to increase diversity in the workforce and it is a priority for the Commission and Executive Director to do so.

Innovations in Private Land Management- Mr. Scott Sanders, Director of the Office of Conservation Planning Services, presented information on Private Land Innovation Initiatives. He provided examples of current programs in place at FWC to assist private landowners with a goal of proactive wildlife habitat conservation prior to projects being in the development stage.

#### Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett commented on the wide expansion of private lands in the State of Florida. He noted the importance of FWC coordinating with private landowners on management of fish and wildlife throughout the state.

Commissioner Bergeron commented on the importance of partnerships in dealing with private land issues. He noted that there comes a point where compensation for private landowners related to predators affecting the private landowner's livelihood is necessary. He suggested the use of Amendment One funding to help address the topic of conservation easements.

Chairman Corbett echoed the comments of Commissioner Bergeron about the protections that are attained through conservation easements. He noted part of the struggle of the agency in coordinating with small landowners is the level of trust with government entities. If FWC can show private landowners how the agency can assist them in increasing their conservation efforts and the return they can receive, it would be a step in the right direction.

Commissioner Hanas commented that in talking with private landowners, the biggest discussion point is always the trust issue. He mentioned that Best Management Practices are still up in the air and will be worked through once finalized. He noted FWC has the tools to get the job done. He asked Executive Director Wiley how the agency can better address the trust issue with private landowners.

Commissioner Roberts stated that rather than assist, most private landowners think the government entity wants to control their private land. The fear of losing control of their property is the major impeding factor in FWC moving forward on this coordinated effort. By providing additional information about their options without making it a requirement, FWC can find success in this program.

Commissioner Rivard commented that encroaching development can cause hesitation by private landowners. He provided an example of sector planning that was a positive aspect of private land management and a community which saw the habitat management aspects.

Commissioner Priddy noted that the agency representatives need to be good listeners when going out into these situations where they address private landowners. Having a public outreach background and less of the technical background can help in the outcome of conversations with private landowners.

Vice Chairman Yablonski added that listening is key to building and earning the trust of landowners. He noted that several of the Commissioners are private landowners themselves, so that could be a key to building that trust. Creating a Landowner Advisory Group and allowing the group members to bring up items of importance to the Commission and staff may help get the conversations started.

Executive Director Wiley stated that action is the biggest positive in gaining the trust of private landowners. Listening and learning about the objectives of each landowner and commenting on how the agency can help meet those goals will greatly benefit the program and in turn the habitat.

Chairman Corbett thanked Mr. Sanders and asked that he coordinate with Executive Director Wiley to distribute the compiled list of items to help move this process forward.

Commissioner Bergeron asked about the agency influence on Amendment One.

Executive Director Wiley responded that Amendment One discussion will be brought up in the Legislative and Budget Update during this meeting.

Chairman Corbett commented of the positive effect the Bergeron family has had on the state of Florida and the land management aspects in South Florida.

### **Strategic Discussion Follow-up: Conservation in North America- Past, Present and Future**

Vice Chairman Yablonski introduced special guest speaker, Mr. Shane Mahoney, Executive Director of Sustainable Development and Strategic Science, Department of Environment and Conservation, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Mahoney addressed the Commission and spoke about Conservation in North America. He noted the universal problem is that too few people care about Conservation. Of the people who do care, they are divided over one thing or another and they fight over small issues. Finally, he commented that new funding models need to be developed for conservation. He suggested placing more of a social aspect on conservation and less of the professional and business aspect, therefore creating more of a buy in for the individuals of the state.

#### Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett commented on working with Mr. Mahoney on future planning efforts related to the Commission.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted the importance of what the agency does on conservation and the desire to move this leadership vision forward.

Executive Director Wiley added that the agency is working on integrating the philosophy presented here by Mr. Mahoney into the everyday aspects of the agency.

Commissioner Roberts commended Mr. Mahoney for the delivery of his presentation relaying the message of conservation. He suggested that Mr. Mahoney provide this presentation to Congress to move this country forward in conservation.

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

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 5:09 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, April 15, 2015.

#### **Wednesday, April 15, Reconvene**

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

#### **Adoption of Minutes**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bergeron, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the February 2015 minutes were approved as written.

#### **Adoption of Meeting Agenda**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Priddy, seconded by Vice Chairman Yablonski and carried, the April 2015 Meeting agenda was approved with the amendment of moving the Legislative and Budget Update from Tuesday to Thursday.

#### **Approval of Consent Agenda**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Hanas, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the April 2015 Consent Agenda items were approved.

#### **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Wiley highlighted the following items from the Executive Director's report:

- 2016 Python Challenge
- Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center Annual Outdoor Experience on May 2, 2015
- Courtney Tye celebration of life memorial tree planting
- Heroes on the Water National Program
- FWC response to the National Guard helicopter crash in the Gulf of Mexico
- Division of Law Enforcement Reaccreditation Status
- Five year anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

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

Chairman Corbett spoke of the previous discussions at past Commission Meetings surrounding conflict wildlife. He noted the importance of working collaboratively with all the stakeholders on this important topic. Due to the recent escalation of human/wildlife interactions throughout the state, he commented that the Commission would facilitate a productive dialogue to determine the proper policy direction moving this topic forward.

Chairman Corbett then introduced Mrs. Diane Eggeman, Director of the Division of Hunting and Game Management, who presented the next item.

### **Items Requiring Action**

New Rules for Limited Bear Hunting Season- Mrs. Eggeman presented the proposed new rules for a limited bear hunting season for review and approval to advertise as draft.

Mr. Wiley introduced Mr. Dave Chanda, Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, and invited him to address the Commission.

Director Chanda presented information to the Commission on management of bears in the State of New Jersey (NJ).

Vice Chairman asked about the percentages of harvest rates in NJ and how the road kills and hunting harvest breakdown.

Director Chanda noted that opening a hunt in NJ and adjusting the rules and requirements as the hunt progressed throughout the years is necessary. He provided the website information for the State of New Jersey for anyone who is interested in learning more about the management process or the presentation he provided.

Chairman Corbett commented that the bears highlighted in the presentation are commonly in areas of human population.

Director Chanda commented on the educational efforts in NJ and also addressed future plans to expand the hunting season in an effort to reduce and stabilize the population levels commensurate with available habitat and consistent with reducing risk to public safety and property.

Director Chanda thanked the Commission for the invitation to present this information.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked if there was any revenue generated by the sale of licenses or permit tags for hunting bears in NJ.

Director Chanda responded that the Legislature is responsible for setting fees associated with licenses and permit tags, and currently has not done so. The NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife currently only charges a two dollar license issuance fee and the average annual sale of permit tags totals approximately \$8,000.00.

Mrs. Eggeman finished her presentation on the proposed draft rule for a new limited hunting season for bears.

Executive Director Wiley commented that the proposed harvest objective numbers presented may change depending on the population estimates that will be completed and received by Commission staff over the next several months.

Vice Chairman Yablonski requested clarification on the estimated harvest objectives for three of the bear management units compared to the target of not exceeding 20% mortality for each unit.

Mrs. Eggeman responded that each unit has a different level of roadkill in relation to the population estimate which has a large effect on the proposed harvest rate in each of those units.

Chairman Corbett thanked Mrs. Eggeman for the presentation.

### **Public Comment**

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Chairman William Massey with the Franklin County Commission addressed the Commission. He thanked FWC related to the efforts by the agency in dealing with the East Point bear incident and these issues in Franklin County.

Mr. Chris Doolin addressed the Commission related to the Franklin County bear management issues. He commended the Executive Director, staff, and especially the work of Ms. Jackie Fauls, Legislative Affairs Director, for the tireless work on these issues that are now happening more frequently. He added that the Small County Coalition recommends moving forward with the staff recommendation of initiating a limited bear hunt. He requested continued dialogue with local government officials on this issue as it moves forward.

Mr. Newton Cook, Executive Director of the United Waterfowlers of Florida, addressed the Commission. He noted support of staff recommendation on moving forward with a hunt. He commented that these decisions need to be based on science and data instead of emotions.

Mr. Steve Greenwell, President and Founder of the Tallahassee Safari club, addressed the Commission. He spoke in support of the science behind this decision and would recommend the Commission approve the staff proposal. He added that Canada is a prime example of allowing bait for hunting of bears.

Ms. Sandy Tedder addressed the Commission in opposition to the proposal. She commented that people can easily learn to live with bears. She noted that the management tools not related to hunting are very strong and she supports the increases in fines for penalties related to the next agenda item. She would hope that these other management tools would be utilized first before opening up the options of a hunt.

Ms. Kate Macfall with the Human Society of the United States (HSUS) addressed the Commission with strong opposition to the proposed hunting option for managing the species. Before moving forward with a hunting season, she requested the Commission direct staff to utilize other tools to manage this species. She noted the difference between Florida Black Bears compared to the sub-species located in other states.

Ms. Leslie Carlile addressed the Commission and spoke of the increasing population of humans which has caused the issue to grow to this level. She volunteered her time to assist in whatever way she can.

Ms. Laura Bevan, Southern Regional Director with HSUS, addressed the Commission. She commented that nearly two thirds of the population of Florida oppose this proposed hunt. She requested that the Commission listen to the majority of the public who strongly oppose this proposal. She commented that science does not confirm the correlation between harvest and subsequent human-bear conflicts. Educating the public should be the top priority.

Mr. Bill Marvin, President of Future of Hunting in Florida, addressed the Commission representing a broad number of hunters. He thanked staff and the Commission for taking a conservative approach to this issue. He noted support of staff recommendation.

Ms. Denise Dannels addressed the Commission in opposition to the proposed hunt.

Mr. Connor Dannels addressed the Commission in opposition to the proposed hunt and suggested more efforts on waste management controls.

Mr. Al Hammond, Southern Regional Director with the National Rifle Association, addressed the Commission. He noted strong support for the conservative approach in the staff proposal for reopening the bear hunting season in Florida. One change he requested was to reduce the fee for residents from \$100.00 to \$50.00 which would correlate with the national average for permits for this type of hunt.

Mr. Dana Stetson addressed the Commission opposed to the proposal. He recommended addressing the waste management issue and completing a population estimate before moving forward. He noted the importance of dealing with the nuisance bears themselves, rather than those that are a potential nuisance.

Mr. Bill Sagues addressed the Commission in general support of staff recommendation on the proposed bear hunt. In opening up this hunt, it immediately opens up this species to a lot of conservationists who have a vested and economic interest in sustaining the species for the future. He noted concern for traditional bowhunters related to the proposed October season. He suggested that with that timeframe, it will make every deer hunter a bear hunter, and it may have a

negative effect on the species. He suggested using a tag season closely related to the alligator harvest process. It will increase the efficiency in this type of hunt and help combat poaching.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell, Director of Wildlife Conservation with Audubon Florida, addressed the Commission. She noted the public comments provided to the Commission on this issue. She commented that the habitat carrying capacity is not the true issue. It is more about social carrying capacity of the species. She questioned if the comment of bears being overpopulated in their natural habit will extend further with the loss of additional habitat. Because of several disconnects between the message of staff and the public, the Commission seems to be unclear with the importance of science compared to the traditional hunting rights which are important to the stakeholders and the agency.

Mr. Richard Roland, President of Florida Hunter Education Association, addressed the Commission in support of the staff proposal.

Ms. Laurie Macdonald, Florida Director with Defenders of Wildlife, addressed the Commission in opposition to moving forward with the proposal. She is concerned that old data is being used and she feels that it will have a negative effect on the high level of integrity that the agency is known for throughout the nation. She voiced some concern over the weight requirement and the 100 yard distance required for the bear to be away from the bait station. She also voiced opposition to the five day open season as proposed.

Mr. Anthony Rogers-Wright, Policy Director for Environmental Action, addressed the Commission. He noted opposition to the proposed hunt. He referenced a 2005 report by Edward A. Tabbs, Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology of Rutgers State University, titled "Correlation of Reduction of Nuisance Black Bear Complaints with implementation of a hunt versus non-violent program". The report concludes that non-violent programs reduce human bear conflicts more effectively. He announced that the members of Environmental Action have raised \$5,387.00 to donate to the HSUS to assist FWC with non-lethal methods in addressing this issue.

Mr. Josiah Keach addressed the Commission. He commented that he did not feel the Commission was unbiased on this.

Ms. Maria Bolton-Joulbert addressed the Commission voiced concern about relying on trust of the hunters who will be a part of this if approved. She was concerned about the webinar on Monday when a hunter was disrespectful to the environmental activists.

Ms. Kelley Bowler addressed the Commission in opposition to the hunt.

Ms. Velva Peterson addressed the Commission in opposition to the hunt, as there are better ways to reduce the human-bear conflict. She commented that the amount of roadkill since delisting has been at the highest levels in history. She requested the Commission be more involved with commenting on proposed development to ensure that growth does not take away more habitat for all native species of Florida.

Ms. Carla Wilson addressed the Commission and noted that the comments provided up to this point that have been provided to the Commission show 74% opposition. She asked if any of the Commissioners would be applying for a permit to hunt. She voiced opposition to the bear hunt and requested the Commission listen to the heavy public outcry.

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission and suggested giving the new education tools a two year opportunity to have a positive effect, then review the progress and see if hunting needs to be proposed again.

Ms. Shirlene Stuckey addressed the Commission in opposition to the hunt. She recommended coordinating with individuals in areas where there have been no negative interactions with bears and determining the specific actions that can be communicated to those communities that have had negative interactions with bears to correct any behaviors that may be causing these conflicts.

Mr. Brandon Lavoie addressed the Commission in opposition to the hunt.

Mr. Allan Tucker addressed the Commission and spoke of his time in the woods as a hunter and the interactions with bears in the natural environment. He noted staff proposal is a good start to moving forward with a limited hunt. He

made suggestions on ways to improve the proposal if moving forward with staff recommendation. He recommended an educational program requirement before any permits are allowed for hunting this species.

Ms. Teresa Wineland with the Southeastern Dog Hunters Association (SDHA) addressed the Commission. She noted the efforts of those individuals in high density black bear habitat to live with this species. She commented that the SDHA appreciates the hard decision that the Commission has to make.

Mr. Chuck Echenique with United Waterfowlers addressed the Commission and noted the immense amount of work staff has put into management of this species. He commented that there is a need for this proposed hunt for additional safety of hunters in the woods.

Mr. Bill George addressed the Commission in support of the bear hunt, but proposed some tweaks to the staff recommendation to allow more days of the hunt for regular gun season on WMAs. He noted that clear communication on what hunters are allowed to do on each area is important.

Ms. Marylyn Feaver with the East Panhandle Stakeholders Group addressed the Commission and commended FWC staff for coordinating with all stakeholders involved in this issue to try and come up with options of ways to move forward with Bear Management. She noted that the DNA sampling they do in Canada could be something to try and incorporate into the management of Florida black bear.

Ms. Jo Staats addressed the Commission noting past history of being involved with bear hunting in West Virginia, opposing the hunt in Florida.

Mr. Wayne Zahn, representing Lykes Brothers, addressed the Commission supporting the limited bear hunting season.

Mr. Bryan Wilson, Central Florida Coordinator for the Animal Rights Foundation of Florida, addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal. He noted if this proposal is approved, there will be unenforceable rules and poaching will be uncontrollable. He requested the Revisions to Bear Related rules be in effect for several years before discussing opening a hunt.

Mr. Stephen Martin addressed the Commission in opposition to a hunt.

Dr. Julia Gress with the University of Florida addressed the Commission and requested the public outcry of opposition to this proposal be discussed and taken into account before making this decision. She noted the bear population estimates are not necessarily the actual data, but best guesstimates.

Mr. Lane Stephens with Florida Airboat Association, Florida Dog Hunters and Sportsman Association, Florida Sportsman's Conservation Association, and the Everglades Coordinating Council addressed the Commission. He noted support from the thousands of Sportsmen he represents on the proposal.

Dr. Jennifer Hobgood, Wildlife Abuse Campaign Manager with HSUS, addressed the Commission regarding opposition to a limited bear hunt as a management tool for this species. She recommended the agency efforts be directed more toward enforcement, education, and waste management. She addressed several issues with proposals of using dogs or bait to hunt bears. She added that wildlife watchers outnumber hunters 16 to 1 and spend three billion dollars a year in Florida.

Ms. Joi Hosker addressed the Commission in opposition to a still hunt. She proposed the use of dogs in the limited hunt if it is approved. She noted the issues with a still hunt for this species.

Ms. Rachel Taylor addressed the Commission and proposed sending information to the Commissioners on sterilization programs currently in use in the Western United States for wild horses to assist in population management. She noted that this could be something for consideration in place of a hunt of this species.

Ms. Hanna Hodges addressed the Commission in support of the proposal for a limited bear hunt.

Mr. Manley Fuller, representing the Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF), addressed the Commission. He suggested removing the smaller sub-units of land from this proposal. He asked about the proposal related to quotas.

Executive Director Wiley commented that the harvest objective is not to be confused with a quota.

Mr. Fuller clarified that FWF is in support of this proposal if there is a change to remove the smaller sub-units.

### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked about the practicality and feasibility of relocating problem bears.

Mrs. Eggeman responded that the agency rarely relocates problem bears due to the fact that it would just be moving the problem to another area.

Dr. Thomas Eason, Director of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, added that bears which are not classified as nuisance bears could be moved if they end up in a populated area and show no signs of nuisance behaviors. He confirmed that conflict bears are no longer relocated due to the reasoning provided by Mrs. Eggeman.

Commissioner Priddy asked about the proposed requirement of checking the bear taken during a hunt within 12 hours of recovery. Also the concern about the archery bow strength requirement.

Mrs. Eggeman responded that the check stations will be open during hours that will allow hunters to comply with this requirement, even though the stations will not be open 24 hours. Staff proposed methods of take that were previously allowed for bear hunting. Overall, accurate shot placement and careful decisions on when the shot should be taken are by far the most important factor.

Finally, Commissioner Priddy asked about the seasons which overlap on WMAs.

Mrs. Eggeman noted the seasons on the WMAs may seem complicated depending on the quota hunts that are already in place on the WMAs. On areas where there are not quota hunts, all the methods of take suggested in this proposal would be allowed.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked about the recommendation of \$100.00 for the bear permit and how it relates to the national average.

Mrs. Eggeman replied that the proposed \$100.00 fee is at the upper end of the range of other state fees and the national average is around \$50.00.

Commissioner Rivard asked how communication is planned for some of the complicated issues proposed.

Mrs. Eggeman responded that communication to the public at the beginning is important. Ensuring the permitted hunters know where to check for information to see if the hunt is closed based on the check station data that will be updated each day.

Chairman Corbett noted that the agency wants to be cautious in this approach. He asked how the public would learn about closure of specific Bear Management Unit (BMU) hunt areas.

Mrs. Eggeman responded that the check stations would be in constant communication with HQ and the decision would be made to post information on whether or not the harvest of this species has reached the objectives and therefore close the season on the BMU.

Executive Director Wiley commented that he is comfortable with the communication channels between the agency and the hunting groups and individual hunters. This will not be a major issue.

Commissioner Bergeron asked when the current population estimates would be received.

Dr. Eason responded that two of the areas will have the population estimates ready by late July or August.

Commissioner Bergeron asked about the harvest of palmetto berries on public lands.

Executive Director Wiley noted that FWC does not allow harvest of palmetto berries on lands where FWC is the lead managing agency. He noted some other lead managing agencies may have limited harvest opportunities and FWC has been communicating with these agencies on the importance of this food source for black bears.

Commissioner Roberts noted using the 2002 population estimates will keep the Commission on a very conservative approach to this issue. He noted the importance of reporting by the hunters that do take this species as a part of an approved limited hunt, so that staff can work effectively to ensure the harvest objectives are not exceeded. He noted support of the seven day proposal with the option to cut off once the harvest objective is met in the specific area.

Commissioner Bergeron asked Dr. Eason about the population estimates and whether or not it would take into account the amount of bears the habitat can handle compared to the total number of bears in the environment. He noted the importance of that information. He also asked staff to review the proposal for the South Region taking into consideration those areas closed for hunting.

Dr. Eason responded that the data collection techniques are significantly more in depth compared to the previous population estimates that were conducted in the early 2000's. The results from this current study will give FWC a broad view of the population across the bear management unit.

Commissioner Priddy commented that if hunting moves forward, it in no way decreases any other efforts on behalf of the staff to manage human-bear conflicts through the other tools in the Bear Management Program. This would be a comprehensive approach to assist with conflict wildlife situations.

Vice Chairman Yablonski added that the Florida Black bear is a conservation success story. He commented on the multiple reasons he supports staff recommendation to move forward with the proposed season.

Commissioner Rivard stated that past action by the Commission to close the bear hunting season in Florida was not due to hunting being unsustainable, but more based on destruction of habitat. The current Commissioners place large importance on data to support their decisions and even using the data from 2002 he noted support for a conservative hunting season.

Commissioner Hanas fully supports the staff recommendation.

#### Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Priddy, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the Commission approved the staff recommendation of a seven day season with the option to enact an early cut-off if the harvest objectives of the BMU are met, and with using the lower harvest objective numbers for the South Region.

#### Lunch break

Revisions to Bear Related Rules- Dr. Eason presented proposed revisions to bear related rules.

#### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Julie Wraithmell addressed the Commission with support of the staff proposal on this topic. She noted that there is a need to approach the local municipalities for jurisdiction within designated primary habitat. She requested the Commission guidance document be presented along with an action plan to determine how this will best be enacted, and also a delineation of bear country so that the municipalities are aware of their specific responsibilities to coordinate bear management techniques appropriately.

Ms. Laurie MacDonald addressed the Commission with a request to finalize these proposed changes as quickly as possible. She requested a follow-up report on enforcement of the lower first offense fine for feeding bears once it is enacted for a period of 6 months or so. She noted the importance of working with the courts to ensure they understand the importance of enforcing violations of these rules. She requested more information on the one strike policy with nuisance bears, as she has not seen that in this presentation. She requested to meet with FWC staff and Executive Director Wiley to move forward with providing the information to the local municipalities.

Mr. Manley Fuller addressed the Commission and thanked staff for dealing with these issues. He noted concurrence with Ms. Wraithmell on the need for action plans and delineation of bear country to local municipalities. He added concern about the one strike policy for bears that may not be nuisance bears but are simply in the area of nuisance bears.

#### Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked about the policy related to the one strike rule that speakers commented on.

Dr. Eason noted that there is specific policy differentiating nuisance bears and those bears that simply wander into the same area that are not a safety risk.

Vice Chairman Yablonski questioned if staff can use the revenue from the hunt to fund an educational campaign specifically.

Dr. Eason responded that staff is happy to work with the Legislature to move this request forward.

Commissioner Rivard commented that the biggest part of this is working with the local municipalities who have the jurisdiction to enact local rules related to waste management. He noted the personal preference to have it included in the rule that a written warning be built into the language prior to penalizing anyone related to enforcement of the new rules.

Commissioner Roberts asked if a warning is considered a penalty.

Mr. Bud Vielhauer, General Counsel, responded that no, a warning is not considered a penalty.

Commissioner Roberts added that the warning is an important part of the process. He asked if staff could amend the proposal at this time.

Mr. Vielhauer responded that a motion for an amendment would be required for any changes to the staff recommendation which was already voted on here today.

Commissioner Bergeron asked about the policies in place to deal with nuisance bears and the one strike issue.

Dr. Eason responded the one strike is not an accurate description of the policy, rather it is a more aggressive approach to dealing with nuisance bears and if there is an elevated safety risk caused by a bear, staff has the ability to analyze the situation and make the decision to euthanize the bear if human safety is at risk.

Executive Director Wiley noted that there is an abundance of caution being used by staff in exercising judgement before euthanizing a bear that is caught in a situation. The previous policy was allowing more bears to be relocated even though some signs pointed to nuisance behavior. The new policy allows staff to analyze the situation and make a decision to euthanize a bear that has signs of nuisance behavior before a negative human interaction occurs.

Commissioner Priddy noted that the decision to euthanize a bear is well documented and asked what the process is for approval to euthanize a bear.

Dr. Eason noted any decision to euthanize a bear goes through a standard chain of command process involving multiple approvals by leadership staff.

#### Commission Action

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

Upon a motion for amendment to direct staff to go back and review the language to add the need for a warning for violations by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Hanas and carried, the Commission approved the recommendation.

Upon a motion for amendment to include the language of a required warning for unintentional feeding issues by Commissioner Rivard, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the Commission approved the recommendation.

Quail Enhancement Areas (QEA) Hunting Rule Change- Mr. Greg Hagan, Northern Bobwhite Coordinator with the Division of Hunting and Game Management, presented proposed draft rules modifying the process of requiring QEA quota permits.

#### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked why only four of the QEAs would be included in the proposed rule changes.

Mr. Hagan responded that the fifth QEA does not have the low attendance issues like the other four and the stakeholders at the fifth QEA requested the previous rules stay in place.

#### Commission Action

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

#### **Strategic Discussion Follow-Up: Florida Youth Conservation Center Network (FYCCN)**

Mr. Tom Champeau, Director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries, and Mr. Doc Kokol, Director of the Office of Strategic Initiatives, presented an update on current minority outreach activities, past year successes, and future vision for the FYCCN.

#### Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett noted the importance of the outreach efforts presented.

Executive Director Wiley recognized Mr. Kokol for the presentation and the unique perspective that moving this action forward will need. He highlighted the success on FYCCN to this point.

Commissioner Rivard thanked the Chairman for the initial vision on this FYCCN initiative. He commented on the option of coordinating with local parks which already have large family events scheduled throughout the year and creating additional educational options around those events.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted the importance of getting the kids interested in the topic.

Chairman Corbett noted the desire of FYCCN to find an entity that can provide guidance from a marketing perspective to help with the business plan that includes the vision of increasing Youth Conservation interest throughout the state.

Commissioner Priddy named several agencies on a national level that could provide some additional details on this topic.

Executive Director Wiley commented on another great partnership effort related to youth conservation. The Ocala Youth Conservation Center Outdoor Experience will be held May 30, 2015.

#### **Legislative and Budget Update**

Ms. Charlotte Jerrett, Chief Financial Officer, provided an update to the Commission on the most recent Budget issues related to FWC.

Executive Director Wiley provided an update to the Commission on the most recent Legislative issues related to FWC.

#### **South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC)**

Mrs. Jessica McCawley, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, provided an update on actions taken at the March SAFMC meeting. No final action was taken by the Council; however, many amendments to management plans are underway. Amendments being considered by the Council include modifications to the joint amendment with the Gulf Council on king mackerel, new measures for south Florida snapper grouper species, changes to the black sea bass pot fishery, establishing spawning special management zones (including Warsaw Hole and Daytona Steeples off Florida), and attempts to lengthen the golden tilefish commercial season. The Council requested emergency action for blueline tilefish in the mid-Atlantic region and suspended work on a recreational harvest tag program to monitor species with low ACLs. Finally, the Council is requesting an exemption by NOAA from the ACL requirement for spiny lobster due to its unique life history. No specific direction was requested from the Commission at this time.

### **Final Rule- Restricted Species Endorsement**

Ms. Melissa Recks with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management presented a proposed final rule for Restricted Species Endorsement (RS) regulations. Staff recommended adopting a series of changes that would remove outdated provisions in the RS regulations, modify and clarify income requirements associated with qualifying for a RS, provide an additional way for people to document a disability for the purposes of qualifying for a RS, increase the amount of time the family member of the RS holder has to apply and qualify for their own RS after the death or disablement of the original RS holder, and modify the requirements associated with qualifying for a RS via the vessel purchase exemption.

### **Public Comment**

The following individual addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Jerry Sansom, Executive Director of the Organized Fishermen of Florida (OFF), addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation. He mentioned this was a prime example of industry working with the agency to make progress.

### **Commission Action**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Hanas, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and carried, the Commission approved the staff recommendation.

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

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

Mr. Bill George addressed the Commission and noted the unfair issue of second round alligator permits being available at discounted rates to individuals before everyone has an opportunity to get the first round of permits. He also commented on alligator egg collection going out to public bid. He mentioned the opportunity for the Commission to make some important changes to this process. He will send additional information to the Commissioners on this topic.

Mr. Jerry Sansom, Executive Director of OFF, addressed the Commission related to items on the agenda for the next day since he was unable to attend on that day. He noted support from OFF for gear modifications for stone crab traps as recommended by staff. He commented on fishing practices related to harvest of mullet during the fall roe season that result in high levels of discard mortality. OFF submitted suggestions for rule changes that might address the problem to Commission staff and will be working with staff to find a way to keep this from happening next year during the season. He mentioned his role as the Brevard Commissioner for the Inland Navigation District and the District's effort to promote access to the waterway in coordination with local and state agencies. He offered to work with staff to identify opportunities for the District to help fund FYCCN projects.

Chairman Corbett asked Mr. Sansom to coordinate with Mr. Kokol on this proposal for promoting access to the waterway along with the FYCCN.

Executive Director Wiley commented that the Division of Law Enforcement will work with Mr. Sansom on the issue of a future LBR related to boating and waterways.

Mr. Daniel Parker with Reptile Keepers of Florida addressed the Commission and thanked Commission staff for coordinating on issues related to Florida Turtles.

Mr. Chuck Echenique addressed the Commission related to quota hunts. There has been a lot of discussion on skipping the application for the quota hunt and adding just the preference point so that the individual can get the area that they are hoping for every few years.

### **Commissioner Exchange**

Chairman Corbett noted what a tremendous meeting day this was and the courage the Commission took to make the decisions today. He thanked the Commissioners for listening and providing comments and feedback today. He thanked Director Chanda for presenting information related to the experiences in the State of New Jersey related to bear management.

Commissioner Roberts thanked Mrs. Eggeman, Dr. Eason, and the teams who worked on the presentations related to the Florida Black Bear.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked the Commissioners, as he may not be around tomorrow at the close of the meeting due to family issues.

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

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 5:36 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, April 16, 2015.

### **Thursday, April 16, Reconvene**

Chairman Corbett reconvened the meeting at 8:37 a.m.

### **Awards and Recognition**

Colonel Curtis Brown introduced Mr. Jim Harrison with Shikar Safari Club International and invited him to remind the Commission about the organization. Colonel Brown then presented the 2015 Shikar Safari Officer of the Year Award to Officer George Reynaud.

Mr. Bill Cline, Section Leader of Hunter Safety and Public Shooting Ranges, presented the Hunter Education Instructor of the Year Award to Mr. Eddie Childs.

Next, Mr. Cline presented the Youth Hunting Program of Florida Volunteer Landowner of the Year Award to Mr. Harris Hill.

Dr. Eason presented the FWC Employee Retirement Recognition to Mr. Jeffrey Schardt for 39 years of service to the State of Florida.

### **Items Requiring Action**

#### **Draft Rule- Stone Crab Trap Gear Specifications**

Ms. Kellie Ralston with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management presented a proposed draft rule related to Stone Crab Trap Gear Specification. For Collier, Monroe, and Miami-Dade counties only, staff recommended prohibiting round entrances in stone crab traps, limiting the entrance size of stone crab traps to no larger than 5 ½ inches by 3 1/8 inches; and limiting the volume of stone crab traps to no more than 16 inches by 20 inches by 12 inches or 3840 cubic inches. Staff also recommended returning for a final public hearing at the June Commission meeting.

#### **Public Comment**

The following individual addressed the Commission in relation to this agenda item:

Mr. Jerry Sansom spoke in support of the stone crab trap specification changes during the general public comment period provided on April 15, 2015.

### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Rivard noted the key to this draft rule is that the stakeholders support this change.

Chairman Corbett noted that this draft rule would improve equity and fairness within the fishery.

### Commission Action

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

### **Staff Report – General Counsel Report**

Mr. Vielhauer commented that there were no legal matters to report at this time.

### **Future Agenda Items**

Mr. Sutton reviewed potential agenda items for the upcoming June 2015 Commission Meeting which will be held in Sarasota, Florida.

### **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC)**

Ms. Martha Bademan, Section Leader with the Division of Marine Fisheries, provided an update on discussions from the March 30 through April 2 GMFMC meeting. Red snapper topics included: implementation of sector separation and resulting estimates for private recreational and federally-permitted charter for hire vessel federal seasons; sector reallocation; and regional management for the recreational fishery. Other discussion topics included gag grouper and greater amberjack. Staff also briefed the Commission on a red snapper fishery management concept that would entail forming a new management body comprised of the Gulf state marine fisheries management agency directors for red snapper fisheries management. Finally, staff requested direction on two new red snapper reallocation alternatives being considered by the Council.

Executive Director Wiley commented that staff is currently working with the Council on various red snapper issues. He noted that staff welcome any direction or input Commissioners have on red snapper reallocation and regional management.

### Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. James Clements, a Commercial fisherman from Carrabelle, Florida, addressed the Commission. He asked how the Commission would manage the commercial fishery if the management of the red snapper fishery is shifted from the Council to the state of Florida. He felt the commercial sector is best managed under the Council. He asked the Commission let the Council take final action on regional management before trying to shift management of red snapper to the states by other means.

Mr. Trip Aukeman with the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) addressed the Commission and noted CCA's support of the Council's current preferred alternative for red snapper reallocation of 48.5% of the overall quota for the commercial sector and 51.5% for the recreational sector. He also noted CCA's support of a state-based management system for red snapper, noting that the Council's regional management proposal as currently written would not work for Florida.

Ms. Pam Anderson with PCBA, NACO, and member of the Government Affairs committee of the Bay County Chamber of Commerce addressed the Commission. She spoke out against sector separation of red snapper. She noted the need for consistency in announcing season dates for fisheries like red snapper. She voiced her support of reallocation and state management of red snapper.

Mr. James Green, Vice President of Destin Charter Boat Association (DCBA), addressed the Commission. He suggested a mandatory data collection for private anglers and state guide boats as one step to improve management of

this fishery. He requested that if the Commission approved a state season of 70 days, the season stay at 70 days in future years to provide some consistency to the fishery for future data collection. He noted the DCBA has concerns over state-based red snapper management.

Mr. TJ Marshall with the Ocean Conservancy addressed the Commission and requested the Commission take caution before recommending an increase to the annual catch limits for gag grouper because fishermen are not seeing gag in large numbers.

Mr. Jason Delacruz addressed the Commission and noted that he owns a business that services both commercial and recreational fishermen. He stated his opposition to red snapper sector reallocation, noting that he felt it would hurt commercial red snapper fishermen and not significantly benefit recreational fishermen.

Mr. James Clements noted that there is a problem in the recreational fishery with red snapper being discarded to try to catch larger fish to take home. He noted that this could be fixed if recreational anglers were required to keep the first fish they caught.

### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Roberts asked about the two new red snapper sector reallocation alternatives currently being considered by the Council.

Ms. Bademan noted that currently the overall quota is allocated 51% to the commercial sector and 49% to the recreational sector. The new alternatives would allocate the fishery either 51.5% to the recreational sector and 48.5% to the commercial sector (based on Marine Recreational Information Program [MRIP] recalibration results), or 57.5% to the recreational sector and 42.5% to the commercial sector (based on MRIP recalibration results and changes in recreational harvest selectivity).

Executive Director Wiley commented that the first option of reallocating the fishery 51.5% to the recreational sector and 48.5% to the commercial sector has been selected as a preferred alternative by the Council, and he asked the Commission to provide feedback to Ms. Bademan on which alternative would be best to support.

Commissioner Priddy asked about the benefit of supporting the alternative reallocating the fishery 57.5% to the recreational sector and 42.5% to the commercial sector.

Ms. Bademan noted that this option would take into account both the MRIP recalibration and recreational harvest size selectivity. She noted that recreational anglers are harvesting larger fish which gives fish more opportunities to spawn before being harvested.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked about the potential impacts to the commercial fishery if the Commission supported allocating the fishery 57.5% to the recreational sector and 42.5% to the commercial sector.

Ms. Bademan replied that more analysis on these alternatives will be provided at the June Council meeting.

Executive Director Wiley added that staff are taking the time to look at the options presented to ensure no specific sector is unnecessarily penalized. He asked the Commissioners to provide feedback on regional management, noting that staff needs to work through the details to get the proposed regional management plan in a better place for Florida.

Commissioner Roberts noted that he would like to see regional management move forward but the current proposal needs work.

Executive Director Wiley also mentioned the five states plan that would shift management from the Council to a newly-defined group lead by the Gulf States. He noted this is very conceptual and would take a lot of work to get to a final point.

Commissioner Roberts responded that the five states conceptual plan has merit to move forward and explore as a way to manage red snapper in a different way. He also noted that the Commission is supportive of moving forward with the two new red snapper reallocation alternatives.

Commissioner Rivard thanked Mr. Clements for his comments. He noted the five states plan is a concept and there will be a long transparent process if this plan moves forward.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted that the commercial fishery provides an important service to many who cannot fish for red snapper. He also noted that the commercial fishery is managing itself well and the Commission does not have a desire to interfere with the commercial management system.

### **Items Requiring Action**

#### **Final Rule- Gulf Red Snapper Season**

Ms. Bademan presented the final rule on the red snapper season in Gulf state waters. Staff recommended approving the proposed rule setting the recreational harvest season in Gulf state waters to be the Saturday before Memorial Day (May 24) through July 12, Saturdays and Sundays in September and October, and Labor Day. Because October 31 is a Saturday in 2015, the last day of harvest would be Sunday, Nov. 1.

#### **Public Comment**

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. James Clements addressed the Commission stating that if reallocation of red snapper occurred, he would prefer the MRIP recalibration option that would reallocate 48.5 percent of the overall quota to the commercial sector and 51.5 percent to the recreational sector. He noted his opposition to the size selectivity reallocation option.

Mr. Eric Mahoney, a federally-permitted charterboat owner and operator, addressed the Commission. He stated opposition to the Commission's proposed 70-day season, because it limits the number of federal season days available for fishermen in southwest Florida. He suggested the Commission keep the 54-day season that was approved last year.

Mr. Mike Colby, President of the Clearwater Marine Association, addressed the Commission noting opposition for the proposed 70 day season. He questioned if scientific information is supportive of this proposal, or if the increased quota is the driving factor behind this proposal. He suggested staying with the previous season of 54 days.

Mr. Brad Gorst, a federally-permitted charter boat operator out of Clearwater, Florida, addressed the Commission. He commented that there is no scientific information supporting this proposal, which hurts fishermen in areas that only have a red snapper fishery in federal waters. He requested the Commission support an electronic data collection system for the for-hire fleet and a tag system for red snapper. He suggested the Commission stay with a 54-day season.

Mr. Garrett Alberts, owner and operator of a commercial fishing vessel, requested the Commission stick with a 54-day season.

Mr. James Zurbrick addressed the Commission and noted the federal management of this fishery is working. He requested the Commission not reallocate this fishery.

Mr. Charles McPherson, a charterboat captain and recreational fisherman, addressed the Commission in support of a 54-day state season to increase the number of federal season days. He commented on additional data collection methods that could be used to learn about the catch of recreational fisheries, such as cards or stamps.

Mr. Brad Kenyon, a commercial snapper and grouper fisherman, addressed the Commission in opposition to the proposed 70-day state season, stating that this season would only benefit Panhandle anglers. He suggested the Commission keep the 54-day state season. He noted that the management of the recreational fishery needs to change.

Captain Mike Eller with the Destin Charter Boat Association addressed the Commission in opposition to the proposed 70-day season. He added that if the 70-day season is approved, he requested the Commission increase data collection to improve the management of this species.

Ms. Pam Anderson addressed the Commission and stated that recreational anglers are catching larger fish, which means the overall numbers of fish the recreational sector can harvest each year has decreased. She noted that the proposed 70-day season is not unreasonable and the red snapper stock is increasing. She thanked the Commission for efforts to keep fairness in the decisions regarding regulations for this species.

Mr. James Green addressed the Commission in opposition to the proposed 70-day season, noting the lack of red snapper in state waters off southwest Florida. He requested additional data collection measures.

Mr. Wayne Werner addressed the Commission opposed to the 70-day season proposal. He commented that if all the states were compliant, the federal season length would be longer for all fishermen. He noted his opposition to reallocation.

Mr. Chris Phillips addressed the Commission in support of the 70-day season proposal because keeping a 54-day state season would increase the length of the federal season by only a few days. He noted that the extra state days would likely provide more benefit than the extra federal days.

Mr. Matthew Mcleod addressed the Commission in support of the 70-day season proposal. He thanked the Commission for providing access to the public for this fishery.

Mr. TJ Marshall addressed the Commission and noted that more scientific work needs to be done to examine ways to limit discard mortality and protect older, larger red snapper. He spoke in opposition to the 70-day proposed season, noting that Florida's state red snapper fishery doesn't provide access to all Floridians. He expressed concern about Florida's red snapper fishery in state waters.

Mr. Jason Delacruz addressed the Commission in opposition to the 70-day proposal, noting that there are not red snapper in state waters off southwest Florida.

Ms. Candy Hansard thanked the Commission for proposing this 70 day season supporting access to recreational anglers who fish for this species.

#### Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked if the red snapper fishery in state waters is collapsing. He also asked what the federal season would be if the Commission decided to go consistent with the federal season.

Ms. Bademan responded that no, the red snapper fishery is not collapsing in state waters. She noted that federal season estimates take into account the 70-day state season proposal. She stated that if the Commission decided to go consistent with the federal season, along with all the other states going consistent, the number of federal waters fishing days would only increase by an estimated two to six days for a nine to 17-day federal season.

Commissioner Roberts commented that the proposed increase in the number of state season days came about because of the increase in the overall red snapper quota. He noted that as a result of the quota increase, the Commission desired to increase fishing opportunities in state waters.

Commissioner Priddy asked for clarification on dates and season lengths for past state and federal seasons. She noted that private anglers in southwest Florida do not have access to red snapper in state waters, and suggested the state season be reduced to increase federal waters fishing opportunities.

Ms. Bademan commented that last year's state season was 52 days, but would be 54 days if kept in place for 2015 because of the Saturday before Memorial Day start date. She noted the federal season in 2014 was 9 days, and is projected to be seven to eleven days for private anglers in 2015.

Vice Chairman Yablonski noted that decreasing the state season from the proposed 70-day season to a 54-day state season may only increase the federal season by a day or two.

Commissioner Roberts noted that there are certain geographic areas that will benefit from the red snapper season being open in state waters. He commented that the goal of the 70-day state season proposal is to provide the most

opportunity for anglers in state waters without negatively impacting the species or anglers fishing in other areas of the state.

Commissioner Rivard stated that a significant decrease would have to be made to the state season for minimal gains for the federal season. He cited the Commission's mission statement and he noted that the Commission is managing this fishery for its long-term well-being and the benefit of the people of Florida. He stated his support for the proposed 70-day season.

Commissioner Hanas commented on the desire of the Commission to provide equitable red snapper access to all portions of the state if possible.

Vice Chairman Yablonski added that in the past, the Commission has gone consistent with the federal season and some stakeholders have voiced their opposition to that decision because it severely limited the opportunity to fish for this species in state waters. He noted that the Commission has attempted to work collaboratively with the federal process, but the federal system has not been able to provide anglers with adequate fishing opportunities.

#### Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Rivard and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendation. Vice Chairman Yablonski and Chairman Corbett voted in favor of the motion while Commissioner Priddy and Commissioner Hanas voted against the motion.

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

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

Mr. Shannon Hartsfield with the Seafood Management Assistance Resource Recovery Team (SMARRT) addressed the Commission with a request for an increase in Law Enforcement officers in Apalachicola to aid in enforcement of oyster regulations.

Executive Director Wiley commented that the Commission is very mindful of the situation in Apalachicola related to the decline in the oyster fishery. He thanked Mr. Hartsfield for the efforts to assist the Commission in trying to help make some decisions in improving this fishery.

Ms. Peggy Matthews with the American Watercraft Association addressed the Commission related to the online temporary boating education certificate.

Major Richard Moore responded to the request from Ms. Matthews and thanked her for the support of improving this process to ensure the safety of the boaters in Florida. He noted that the Commission is working on moving this forward and is analyzing how to move forward with the current statutory requirements.

Ms. Candy Hansard with the Emerald Coast Reef Association addressed the Commission regarding lionfish and the legacy that this Commission will leave for future generations. She provided a proposal on a pilot project related to the eradication of this invasive species.

Mr. Marcos Cantos with the Florida Reptile Industry addressed the Commission on issues pertaining to this industry. He requested assistance by the Commission on improving several policies to streamline permitting processes for Florida Reptile breeders. He thanked staff in the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation for working with the Reptile Industry to try and come up with solutions to these issues.

#### Commissioner Exchange

Chairman Corbett thanked the staff at FAMU for welcoming the Commission to this venue, especially President Mangum for the opportunity to meet at this facility. He thanked Regional Director Steve Shea for coordinating the planning of this three day meeting. He noted appreciation for Director Dave Chanda for participating in the discussion on limited bear hunting season. Finally, he thanked the Commissioners for their time and thoughtful discussion on all the agenda items at this meeting.

**Commission Administrative Matters**

The next regularly scheduled Commission meeting is set for June 23-25, 2015 in Sarasota, Florida, commencing at 1:30 p.m. on the first day and 8:30 a.m. each day thereafter.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 12:27 p.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