



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting
June 23-25, 2015
Sarasota, 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 June 23-25, 2015, at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota, located at 1000 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota. Chairman Richard A. Corbett called the meeting to order with the following members in attendance:

Ronald Bergeron, Fort Lauderdale
Chuck Roberts, Tallahassee

Aliese Priddy, Immokalee
Brian Yablonski, Tallahassee

Richard Hanas, Oviedo

Senior and Presenting Staff:

| | |
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| 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 |
| Melissa Recks | Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management |
| Martha Bademan | Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management |
| Kipp Frohlich | Deputy Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation |
| Charlotte Jerrett | Chief Financial Officer |
| Dr. Brad Gruver | Section Leader, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation |
| Carol Knox | Section Leader, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation |
| Jamie Feddersen | Waterfowl and Small Game Management Program Coordinator |

There were 135 individuals registered to speak to the Commission during the three-day meeting.

Meeting Opening

Chairman Corbett called the June 23-25, 2015 meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Regional Director Chris Wynn gave the invocation then Commissioner Priddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special Recognition

Vice Chairman Yablonski introduced several legislative guests who attended the meeting. Representative Greg Steube from District 73 welcomed the Commission to Sarasota. Ms. Shauna Johnson and Mr. Michael Russell with Senator Marco Rubio's Tampa office were also introduced. Finally, Ms. Victoria Brill, legislative assistant from Representative Julio Gonzalez's Office, was recognized.

Budget Workshop

Ms. Charlotte Jerrett, Chief Financial Officer, presented information to the Commission on the agency budget. She also noted that the 2016 Legislative Session will start in January of 2016.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett noted that Commissioner Rivard will be stepping into the role of Budget Liaison for this fiscal year.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked Executive Director Wiley to follow up with Commissioner Rivard since he was not present at the meeting.

Strategic Discussion Follow-Up

Florida Panthers: Research, Management and Recovery Update and Policy Direction for Program Strategic Priorities- Mr. Kipp Frohlich, Deputy Director of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, along with Mr. Gil McRae, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, presented information on the Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team (FPRIT) and updates on current panther research and management activities.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Corbett thanked Mr. Frohlich and Mr. McRae for the thorough report.

Executive Director Wiley commented on the draft policy position paper created by FWC. He thanked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for their partnership and invited Mr. Larry Williams, USFWS State Director, to address the Commission on this topic.

Mr. Williams congratulated FWC on getting panther recovery to this point. He suggested focusing on the perspective of biology in restoring panthers and building on what is already in place regarding habitat. Finally, he stated citizen involvement is key to the success of panther recovery.

Chairman Corbett thanked Mr. Williams for the continued coordination of the USFWS on this important process.

Commissioner Bergeron stated that by taking care of the environment, the wildlife can take care of themselves. He complimented the FWC panther team and USFWS panther team for all of their hard work.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this topic:

Ms. Carol Baskin, founder and CEO of Big Cat Rescue, addressed the Commission. She requested that the Commission not adopt the draft policy position paper. She noted concern of captive cats being housed throughout the state.

Mr. Newton Cook, Executive Director of United Waterfowlers of Florida, Board of Directors member of the Future of Hunting in Florida, and Advisory Council member of the Arthur Marshall Foundation, addressed the Commission. He noted the great work on science related to panthers by FWC and USFWS. He mentioned that there is only one panther species in North America.

Ms. Jennifer Leon addressed the Commission requesting the Commission hold off on supporting the draft policy position paper until more public comment can be collected. She requested FWC come up with innovative ways to help support the Florida Panther.

Ms. Gaylene Vasaturo addressed the Commission with a request not to adopt the draft policy position paper. She noted the importance of private lands on the recovery of this species.

Ms. Nancy Payton, Southwest Florida field representative with Florida Wildlife Federation and Chair of the FPRIT Transportation sub-team, addressed the Commission. She noted support of the draft policy position paper regarding USFWS taking a larger role in the recovery of this species. She requested that FWC revisit designation of primary, secondary and dispersal zones to re-evaluate the use of designations that may not be useful anymore. She thanked Darrell Land, Dave Onorato, and Mark Lotz with the FWC Panther team for their work on this species.

Ms. Ricky Pires, Director of Florida Gulf Coast University's Wings of Hope Program, addressed the Commission regarding a youth education effort focused on Florida wildlife including panthers. She invited the Commissioners to be involved with the "Panther Posse" at any opportunity they can.

Mr. Franklin Adams with the Florida Wildlife Federation addressed the Commission noting frustration about the recovery of the Florida panther. He commented on some of the hurdles that have caused delays on moving the recovery of this species forward.

Ms. Leah Miller addressed the Commission.

Ms. Nancy Smith addressed the Commission with concern about negative public actions that affect wildlife.

Mr. Mike Elfenbein addressed the Commission in thanks to FWC for coming up with the draft policy position paper.

Ms. Briana Stiehl, Assistant Director for Florida Gulf Coast University's Wings of Hope Program, addressed the Commission with a request to await the final review by the FPRIT on recovery numbers before adopting the draft policy position paper.

Ms. Doreen Dupont addressed the Commission and noted importance of habitat conservation related to species recovery.

Ms. Louise Raterman addressed the Commission noting support of Florida citizens to protect the habitat and wildlife.

Mr. Jack Johnson addressed the Commission in agreement with the draft policy position paper. He thanked FWC for listening to the concerns of the landowners in Florida who deal with this on a daily basis.

Mr. Tim Tetzlaff, Director of Conservation for Naples Zoo, addressed the Commission. He commented on the Zoo's ability to support with finances, staff, and facilities to assist with the recovery of panthers.

Ms. Jana Wiggins addressed the Commission with concern of extinction which could occur if Florida panther recovery is not managed properly.

Mr. Paul Carlisle, County Administrator with Glades County Board of County Commissioners, addressed the Commission regarding conservation easements and requesting to work with the agencies who are proposing these easements. He questioned why the re-introduction of panthers further north of the Caloosahatchee does not include the initial range of Georgia, Alabama, and North Carolina.

Mr. Raoul Bataller with Hendry Glades Daily News addressed the Commission with frustration on the science based on this species. He requested better science on the Florida Panther to assist with making management decisions.

Mr. Todd Hallman with Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association (FSCA) addressed the Commission with thanks on this success story and noted support from FSCA on this draft policy position paper.

Mr. Jim Handley representing the Florida Cattleman's Association addressed the Commission with thanks in cooperating with all the stakeholders on this issue. He added support for the draft policy position paper.

Mr. Larry Allan addressed the Commission.

Ms. Jeanne Jain addressed the Commission.

Ms. Jennifer Hecker with the Conservancy of Southwest Florida addressed the Commission regarding the partnership on panther recovery. She noted concerns with the request to change recovery goals without the scientific data to back up those positions. She requested the Commission continue to support staff coordination on the FPRIT to support the recovery of this species.

Mr. James Yonan addressed the Commission in opposition to the draft policy position paper.

Ms. Laurie Macdonald, Florida Director with Defenders of Wildlife, addressed the Commission. She noted that though the Florida panther is a success story, it does not mean that the species is recovered enough to change the management as suggested in the draft policy position paper.

Ms. Ruth Scott, on behalf of the Sierra Club, addressed the Commission in opposition to the draft policy position paper.

Ms. Mercedes Mccallen addressed the Commission in opposition to the draft policy position paper. She commented on the illegal activity of speeding trucks along roadways in panther habitat which can cause a danger to both wildlife and other motorists.

Ms. Laura Bevan with the Human Society of the United States (HSUS) addressed the Commission with concerns regarding the draft policy position paper. She requested FWC remove the draft policy position paper as a proposed course of action and get the science back into FWC.

Ms. Kathy Stearns with Dade City's Wild Things addressed the Commission. She commented that re-introducing panthers into other areas of Florida could assist with some of the wild hog issues.

Mr. Matthew Schwartz, Director of the South Florida Wildlands Association, addressed the Commission in opposition of the draft policy position paper stating it has little data to back up the proposed changes in panther

management. He noted the best way to help manage habitat for the Florida panther is to restrict development in primary habitat throughout Florida.

Ms. Marie Bolton-Joubert addressed the Commission in opposition to the draft policy position paper on behalf of the Sierra Club of Central Florida. She noted the top priority should remain habitat conservation for recovery of this species.

Mr. Wayne Jenkins with the Collier Sportsman and Conservation Club addressed the Commission with support of FWC evaluating the management techniques.

Ms. Alexis Horn with the National Sierra Club addressed the Commission in opposition to any relaxation of recovery management criteria related to the Florida panther. She commented on behalf of Jaclyn Lopez, Florida Director of the Center for Biological Diversity, with recognition of the data collected by FWC but a request to reject the draft policy position paper.

Mr. John Rosier, President of the Everglades Coordinating Council, addressed the Commission in support of the draft policy position paper.

Mr. John Hoover addressed the Commission.

Mr. Maynard Hiss addressed the Commission in opposition to the draft policy position paper. He noted support by citizens of Florida for the purchase of conservation land which can assist in the recovery of many Florida wildlife species.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell addressed the Commission in agreement with the portion of the draft policy position paper regarding payment for ecosystem services. She noted opposition to the draft policy position paper on several other issues and hopes to continue working on this difficult topic moving forward.

Mr. Steven Schaefer addressed the Commission with concern of the data available to possibly consider changing the recovery priorities for the Florida panther.

Mr. Frank Jackalone, Florida Staff Director for the Sierra Club, addressed the Commission in opposition to the draft policy position paper. He suggested the Commission abandon the draft policy position paper.

Mr. Bob Mrykalo addressed the Commission with the suggestion of using pit tags along with the camera systems currently in use.

Ms. Sean Genoff addressed the Commission in support of additional habitat management.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy noted the initial motivation for the draft policy position paper was the question of what is the next step in panther recovery and management in the State of Florida. She noted the fact that even if panthers are relocated north of the Caloosahatchee river that they would still be considered the same population in terms of the recovery priorities. She clarified that FWC is not asking for delisting of the panther off the Endangered Species List. She requested that the Commission consider approving the draft policy position paper.

Commissioner Hanas noted that the draft policy position paper is a draft and it is the only way FWC can move the progress forward on conservation of the species in coordination with all the stakeholders. He noted support for the draft policy position paper proposed.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked the stakeholders who spoke to this issue today. He noted that there may be some important aspects to include in the draft policy position paper before he can support it fully. He presented several

maps that show the history of panther location mapping throughout the decades of conservation in Florida. He suggested water level language be included in the policy. He also noted the need to compensate ranchers for loss of livestock.

Commissioner Priddy addressed the topic of land acquisition.

Commissioner Bergeron clarified that he is most interested in conservation easements related to land acquisition.

Executive Director Wiley noted the draft policy position paper can be edited to be clear on the continued work with USFWS.

Commissioner Roberts noted that the draft policy position paper is an attempt to move forward in adaptive management. He suggested further discussion on this at a future meeting.

Commissioner Priddy recommended working with Executive Director Wiley to incorporate some of the comments from the Commission and stakeholders today and for Mr. Wiley to work individually with each Commissioner to bring a new draft back for consideration at the September Commission Meeting.

Mr. Bud Vielhauer clarified the operation of getting comments from Commissioners on this draft policy position paper.

Imperiled Species Management Plan- Commissioner Roberts made a motion to postpone this presentation until Wednesday's portion of the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and approved.

Special Guest Speaker

Mr. Eric Sutton, Assistant Executive Director, introduced the special guest speaker, Mr. Joe Hutto.

Mr. Hutto spoke of the unique wildlife interactions he experienced in the course of his highly lauded animal behavior work. Mr. Hutto provided additional insight into those experiences which were relevant to the Commission's management practices with certain species in Florida.

Recess Tuesday's Portion of the Meeting

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, June 24, 2015.

Wednesday, June 24, Reconvene

Chairman Corbett reconvened the meeting at 8:38 a.m.

Adoption of Minutes

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

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Yablonski, seconded by Commissioner Hanas and carried, the June 2015 Meeting agenda was approved as amended to hear agenda item 4B, Imperiled Species Management Plan, after item 11, Revisions to Bear Related Rules.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Yablonski, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and carried, the June 2015 Consent Agenda items were approved with a continuation of item two, Stone Crab Trap Gear Specifications, until the September 2015 Commission Meeting.

Executive Director's Report

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

- FWC was recognized by the Quality Deer Management Association as Agency of the Year after implementing the Strategic Plan for Deer Management
- Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day
- Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program Intern recognition
- Memoriam of Mariana Jones

Commissioner Bergeron commented on the many conservation accomplishments of Mariana and John C. Jones. He asked for a moment of silence in their honor.

Items Requiring Action – Final Rules

Rules for Limited Bear Hunting Season- Mrs. Diane Eggeman, Director of the Division of Hunting and Game Management, presented the proposed final rules for a limited bear hunting season.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked if the proposal is conservative compared to other states that allow hunting for bears.

Mrs. Eggeman confirmed that many aspects of this hunt are conservative compared to other states.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Carole Baskin addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Newton Cook, Board Member of Future of Hunting in Florida, addressed the Commission in support of FWC using science to approach this difficult decision.

Ms. Jennifer Leon addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Lucia Reid addressed the Commission with a request for everyone in this state to get involved in the many opportunities to manage bear populations.

Mr. Bill George addressed the Commission in support of the staff proposal based on the fact that FWC is using this as one tool of management for this species. He thanked Executive Director Wiley for distributing information recently to clarify some of the misconceptions that were highlighted by different media outlets.

Ms. Louise Raterman addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She noted the number of citizens who wish to have wildlife around their neighborhoods so that they can experience the wonderful opportunity of seeing the native wildlife.

Ms. Doreen Dupont addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal and requested to stop hunting on any and all species of wildlife in Florida. She noted the Commission should develop other opportunities to collect money such as entry fees into wildlife management areas.

Ms. Jana Wiggins addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She noted the need to curb development in the habitat for all wildlife of Florida.

Mr. Larry Allan addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Laurie Macdonald addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal and requested the fact be included in the record that the previous closure of the bear hunt was due to the diminished population of the species.

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming addressed the Commission and provided details on the new Florida Gulf Coast University “Bear Brigade” that can be utilized by FWC to help address the educational outreach needed for this species.

Ms. Mercedes Mccallen addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She noted the many opportunities that FWC had to comment on development projects in primary bear habitat.

Ms. Marie Bolton-Joubert addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal on behalf of the Sierra Club of Central Florida. She requested FWC improve wildlife corridors instead of focusing on this proposal for a hunt.

Ms. Laura Einsteadig addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Frank Jackalone addressed the Commission in support of hunting exotic species that are dangerous to the environment and natural wildlife in the state. He noted opposition to this proposal. He added that the Sierra Club will use every means possible, both political and legal, to oppose this if it is approved.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal based on the unclear reasons why this proposal was first initiated by FWC.

Mr. Drew Martin addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. James Woodad addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Henry Clifford with Friends of Fakahatchee addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Mr. Robert Andreu, President of the Southwest Florida Outdoorsman Association, addressed the Commission in support of this proposal.

Mr. John Rosier addressed the Commission in support of this proposal on behalf of the Everglades Coordinating Council. He noted that anyone who states FWC does not use other tools in the management process for this species should get involved with the Bear Management Unit (BMU) teams to learn about all the aspects of management.

Ms. Lynda Cozart addressed the Commission in opposition to sport hunting and this proposal. She requested the Commission wait for all of the population estimate numbers before making a decision.

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Karl Ambrose addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Sherry Schlueter, Executive Director of the South Florida Wildlife Center in Fort Lauderdale, addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She recommended a more conservative approach to management.

Mr. Chuck O’Neal addressed the Commission. He requested that FWC work further with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to halt the harvest of saw palmetto berries which is a native food source for this species.

Commissioner Bergeron responded to the issue of saw palmetto berry harvest on public lands as permitted by FDACS, Florida Forest Service. He noted that Adam Putnam, Commissioner of FDACS, has already committed to working with FWC on amending the current process of allowing harvest of these berries on public lands.

Ms. Genevieve Dimmit addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Kevin Barton, Co-Founder and Director of the Wildlife Center of Venice, addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. He noted the need for corridors for this species.

Ms. Carol Abarbanell addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Bishop Wright addressed the Commission and thanked staff for the proposal presented today. He noted support of the Commission in approving staff recommendation.

Ms. Hanna Hodges addressed the Commission in support of this proposal on behalf of youth hunters, The Future of Hunting in Florida, Safari Club International, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Ms. Mary Linehan addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Ms. Margot Ryan addressed the Commission in regards to the alternate proposal of sterilization for this species to assist with population management. She noted that she has a scheduled meeting with Dr. Eason, Director of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, on the proposal of sterilization.

Ms. Anne Marie Cancio addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Ms. Bianca Cancio addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Ms. Jessica Grudsky addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal. She questioned how FWC plans to monitor and enforce the proposed rules.

Ms. Amber Crooks with the Conservancy of Southwest Florida addressed the Commission. She thanked FWC for clarifying a few aspects of this proposal. She noted concern with using data from the 2002 Bear population study.

Ms. Mary Lundeberg addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She requested the Commission wait for the new population data which is scheduled to be completed in late 2016.

Ms. Brenda Curtis addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Katherine McGill addressed the Commission and acknowledged the great work of employees of FWC. She requested the Commission delay approval of this proposal by one year as a compromise to the large amount of feedback from the public in opposition to this. She noted FWC needs to have a clear definition of nuisance when it comes to bears.

Commissioner Priddy requested that Dr. Eason provide additional information to address some of the concerns related to waste management and other tools being used by FWC for management of black bears.

Dr. Eason noted the other tools being used by FWC as a comprehensive approach to management of this species.

Mr. Roy Ault addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Manuel Fernandez addressed the Commission and thanked the Commission for this proposal and offered full support.

Mr. Todd Hallman, Executive Director of the FSCA, addressed the Commission. He noted support of the staff proposal. He added support for the next agenda item as well and waived his time to comment on that item.

Mr. John Bird addressed the Commission with a request for additional data clarification before a decision is made. He noted opposition to this proposal. He requested hunter education be a requirement if this is approved.

Ms. Kate Macfall with HSUS addressed the Commission with strong opposition to this proposal. She noted celebration of two BMUs which have increased population estimates based on the new studies.

Ms. Donna Grace addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She requested the Commission postpone a decision on this proposal until the population study is complete for all BMUs.

Ms. Linda Harsin addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She noted that other states require citizens living in bear areas to purchase bear proof trash cans or they face a fine for non-compliance.

Ms. Jeanne Jain addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She confirmed that as of June 19, 2015, FDACS Florida Forest Service has suspended permits to harvest saw palmetto berries.

Mr. Larry Heiny addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. He asked for additional science before a decision is made on this topic. He suggested listening to the will of the majority of the people on this topic who oppose it.

Mr. Anthony Rogers-Wright, Policy Director of Environmental Action, addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Laura Bevin addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Robert Ruderman, Wildlife Coexistence Director with Animal Hero Kids, addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Amanda Davis addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Mr. Bill Sagues addressed the Commission with concerns about the proposal.

Ms. Ruth Scott addressed the Commission on behalf of Jacqueline Lopez in opposition of this proposal.

Mr. Chuck Echenique addressed the Commission in support of this proposal. He requested that the proposed price for the resident permit be reduced to allow participation and not be in conflict with other opportunities in neighboring states.

Ms. Nancy Hartshorne addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Wayne Zahn representing Lykes Brothers addressed the Commission in support of this proposal. He thanked the Commission for listening to all stakeholders on this issue.

Ms. Laura Hulley addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Stephen Saunders addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Nancy Imperiale addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She offered assistance related to education and outreach.

Mr. Lane Stephens representing the Florida Airboat Association, the Allied Sportsman's Association, and the Florida Dog Hunters and Sportsman's Association, addressed the Commission in support of this proposal and the entire bear management plan.

Ms. Alexis Horn addressed the Commission with a request to delay the decision on this proposal until the scientific data is received for all BMUs and vetted through the public and stakeholders. She added opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Carla Wilson addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Mr. Christopher Bleichner addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Ms. Velva Peterson addressed the Commission related to hunting permits. She asked what the funds from the sale of permits would go towards within the agency. She noted opposition to this proposal.

Ms. Linda Kay addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal. She noted the need for everyone to work together to conserve the wildlife and habitat throughout Florida.

Mr. Avery Cobbs addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Mr. Bryan Wilson addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal. He asked the Commission to use logic when approving rules.

Ms. Peggy Margaret St. James addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal but noted she is not opposed to all forms of hunting. She noted concern of approving this which could possibly increase the opportunity for additional development in the state.

Ms. Donna Lee Hilden, member of the South Central BMU Stakeholder Group, addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Mr. Steven Schaefer addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal. He added understanding of the need to use hunting as a management tool for certain species, but does not agree that the Bear is one of the species to utilize this tool.

Ms. Tricia Kirby addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal.

Ms. Shirley Harner addressed the Commission.

Mr. Mike Elfenbien addressed the Commission with support for this proposal and staff effort on this topic.

Ms. Karen Turnbell addressed the Commission in opposition of this proposal. She noted that offering out of state permits for this would be a mistake. She asked the Commission to wait a year before making a decision on this proposal.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked Mrs. Eggeman what data would be gathered at the check stations if this proposal is approved today.

Mrs. Eggeman responded that total harvest numbers and location of harvest would be gathered at the check station, while the post season survey will gather additional information for analysis by staff to inform possible future seasons. The survey will gather method of hunt information and hunter success rate detail. This survey data will take several months after the closure of the season to gather and analyze.

Commissioner Priddy noted the population data increase in two of the BMUs and asked if there is any indication that the other BMUs would not also have increases.

Mrs. Eggeman responded that there are trend indicators for the other BMUs that show increases in those populations even though the current population study is not complete for those BMUs. She confirmed that using the 2002 population data that is currently proposed for those BMUs is a conservative approach.

Commissioner Bergeron asked when the data would be available for the remaining two BMUs and how the 20% harvest rate numbers were established.

Dr. Eason responded that the remaining two BMUs will have updated population data by June of 2016.

Commissioner Bergeron commented that hunting can be a tool used for population management. He thanked the public who took the time to come out to the meeting to speak on this item. He noted that this is a tough decision and FWC is working on every aspect of Bear Management. He noted the efforts he has taken to speak with leaders of the major waste management companies in Florida, and setting up a meeting with Bear Management staff on how to move forward with solutions to that aspect of this issue. He stated at this time he cannot support the proposal and noted concern for the 20% harvest rate. He will await the data that is still pending and see what that data shows.

Commissioner Roberts commented that one of the responsibilities the Commission has is to manage to the best of its ability the wildlife of the State of Florida based on the science. He noted that based on the scientific information provided, he supports staff recommendation.

Commissioner Hanas added support for this proposal.

Commissioner Priddy commented on the efforts that FWC will continue regarding education, outreach and dealing with the waste management aspect of this topic. She added that she hopes individuals who are opposed to the hunting aspect of management of this species will work with entities in their local area involved in education and outreach to assist in those efforts. She commented that she was not pressured by any group, individual or, political party to make any decision today.

Vice Chairman Yablonski stated that hunters and non-hunters alike wrote the history of conservation in America. He added that the funds from permit sales will go directly back into the Bear Management Program. He added that this proposal is the norm, not the exception, in the United States in regards to management of wildlife.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Vice Chairman Yablonski, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and carried, the Commission approved the staff recommendation with Commissioner Bergeron opposing.

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

Commissioner Bergeron asked if FWC can set up a workshop with waste management companies to get the full picture of associated costs and needs in the areas of each BMU.

Dr. Eason responded that FWC staff are actively coordinating with these companies due to outreach directly related to Commissioner Bergeron's efforts.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Ms. Laurie Macdonald addressed the Commission with strong support for the no feeding rule. She noted concern with the addition of language related to the requirement of a warning to be issued before enforcing the rule.

Ms. Maria Bolton-Joubert addressed the Commission.

Ms. Sean Genoff addressed the Commission noting that people need to be accountable for littering which causes indirect feeding of bears.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell addressed the Commission with support of staff recommendation. She echoed the concern of Ms. Macdonald related to the requirement of the warning before a citation. She looks forward to a work plan which will be developed if this proposal is approved.

Mr. Drew Martin addressed the Commission and stated that this proposal should be the main focus of FWC's efforts.

Mr. John Rosier addressed the Commission and requested additional outreach to the State's Attorney Offices regarding the importance of enforcement and prosecution of violations.

Ms. Melanie Marsh addressed the Commission and stated that this is the most important focus of bear management.

Ms. Gladys Delgadillo with the Conservancy of Southwest Florida addressed the Commission. She noted a request to include the depredation permit for other BMUs not currently listed in the proposal. She noted support for the resolution presented today.

Ms. Katherine McGill addressed the Commission with a request to address birdfeeders as a source of bear attractants.

Ms. Kate Macfall addressed the Commission with support of the proposed rule changes. She echoed the concern about the requirement for a warning to be issued before a citation can be issued on feeding of bears. She requested FWC create a more detailed timeline on working through some of the aspects of this proposal.

Ms. Linda Harsin addressed the Commission with concern over enforcement of waste management in local neighborhoods.

Ms. Laura Bevan addressed the Commission with a question about methods approved for the depredation permit.

Chairman Corbett advised that Dr. Eason would be available to answer any of those questions.

Ms. Karen Turnbull addressed the Commission with specific questions about the depredation permit process.

Mr. Steven Schaefer addressed the Commission.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Priddy asked Colonel Brown to address the change to require a written warning.

Colonel Brown explained that the requirement of a warning is in an instance of unintentional feeding. He added that there is another part of the rule that applies to intentional feeding.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked about the depredation permit related to property damage.

Dr. Eason responded there is no formal definition of property damage, but the intent is to provide a depredation permit to an individual who has worked with FWC on every available option to try and deter that negative

behavior of the bear causing damage to the property. This type of permit would only be issued after FWC attempts to capture the bear.

Vice Chairman Yablonski asked about donations to assist with waste management efforts or education and outreach, but not necessarily the hunting aspect of FWC management efforts for this species.

Executive Director Wiley confirmed that the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida currently has a donation option in place for the waste management efforts and staff will work to make this information more readily available for the public.

Commissioner Bergeron asked Executive Director Wiley to follow up with FDACS on the saw palmetto berry issue and stated that he would like to be involved in this. He noted that there will be an update on the waste management aspect of management of this species at the September Commission Meeting. He asked all the stakeholders to be involved in the aspects of management of this species that they are comfortable with to ensure this issue moves forward.

Commission Action

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

Strategic Discussion Follow-Up: – Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP) - Dr. Brad Gruver, Section Leader with the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, presented a summary of changes made in the draft ISMP based on new scientific information and stakeholder input.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this item:

Mr. Newton Cook addressed the Commission. He commended staff for the hard work on this.

Ms. Amber Crooks addressed the Commission with a few recommendations on changes that could strengthen staff recommendation.

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming addressed the Commission noting the ISMP is a great tool to use in an effort to improve imperiled species and noted continued coordination on this process.

Ms. Julie Wraithmell addressed the Commission and commended staff on the hard work put into this major effort. She added support for this process.

Mr. Drew Martin addressed the Commission in support of protection of endangered species.

Commission Action

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

Item Requiring Action – Final Rule: Pinellas County Manatee Management Zones

Ms. Carol Knox, Section Leader with the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, presented a proposed final rule for establishing new state manatee protection zones in portions of western Pinellas County.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this topic:

Ms. Elizabeth Fleming addressed the Commission in support of this process and staff recommendation.

Mr. Drew Martin addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Commission Action

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

Item Requiring Action – Draft Rule: Black Bass

Mr. Tom Champeau, Director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries, presented proposed draft rules to change statewide and specific length limits for black bass species.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this topic:

Dr. Mike Allen addressed the Commission noting the good science behind this recommendation. He commented on the innovative approach.

Mr. Eamon Bolten addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Adrian Echols addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Don Hatcher addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Jeff Miller addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation and commended staff for their efforts related to this proposal.

Commissioner Discussion

Commissioner Hanas thanked the entire Division of Freshwater Fisheries team on these efforts.

Commission Action

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

Staff Report – Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations

Mr. Jamie Feddersen, Waterfowl and Small Game Management Coordinator, reported on the current and future migratory bird regulations setting process.

Public Comment

The following individual addressed the Commission on this topic:

Mr. Chuck Echenique addressed the Commission in support of the proposal.

Commission Action

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

Staff Report – Legislative Issues Update

Ms. Jackie Fauls, Legislative Affairs Director, presented an update on legislative issues related to the agency.

Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

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

Mr. John Rosier addressed the Commission regarding the alligator permit process. He requested staff work with the stakeholders on this issue to come up with a solution on the issues still occurring.

Mr. Bill George addressed the Commission echoing the comments of Mr. Rosier.

Mr. Chuck Echenique addressed the Commission echoing the comments of both Mr. Rosier and Mr. George.

Mr. Eamon Bolten addressed the Commission regarding recycling collection bins for discarded soft plastic baits.

Recess Wednesday's Portion of the Meeting

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, June 25, 2015.

Thursday, June 25, Reconvene

Chairman Corbett reconvened the meeting at 8:34 a.m.

Special Recognition

Chairman Corbett recognized Mr. Chuck Dees, Vice President of Public Affairs with Waste Management, Inc., and asked him to address the Commission.

Mr. Dees addressed the Commission and thanked them for inviting him today to speak on the issue of waste management. The Florida Waste and Recycling Association (Association) took a position at their meeting yesterday to partner with FWC and local governments to work on resolving the issue of garbage related nuisance bear issues.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Mr. Dees for being here today and for agreeing to assist with this major issue for the state of Florida. He noted that working with FWC staff and the waste management companies, we can make a more concerted effort to reduce these negative interactions with bears which is the most important aspect of Bear Management in Florida.

Mr. Dees noted that the Association not only encompasses the service providers, but also includes the manufacturers which can provide another perspective on this issue. He recommends FWC begin conversations with the Florida League of Cities and Association of Counties to start working with the local municipalities.

Executive Director Wiley confirmed that staff will work with all of the partners involved to move this forward.

Awards and Recognition

Captain Pat Kelly representing the Florida Guides Association (FGA) introduced the FWC/FGA Trained Eyes Coastwatcher Officer of the Year Award. He read the nomination for this recipient and presented Officer Ken Thompson with this award.

Next, Captain Kelly presented the Captain Phil Chapman Conservation Award and read the nomination letter for the recipient, Mr. Luiz Barbieri, Program Administrator with FWRI.

Mr. Brett Boston with the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida introduced Chairman Rodney Barreto who provided details on the Employee of the Year Award and asked Ms. Carol Knox to read the nomination for the recipient. Chairman Barreto presented the award to Mr. David Telesco, Bear Management Program Coordinator for FWC.

Next, Mr. Boston introduced the Louise Ireland Humphrey Lifetime Achievement Award and asked Dr. Eason to read the nomination for the recipient. Dr. Eason presented the award to Mr. Lawson Snyder, former Deputy Director for the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation.

Commissioner Bergeron thanked Chairman Barreto for his service to this Commission and for being here today to help present these awards.

Vice Chairman Yablonski introduced State Representative Jim Boyd and invited him to address the Commission.

Representative Boyd thanked the Commission for hosting this meeting in his district, and noted the job of this Commission is important to the citizens and visitors of Florida. He also thanked Ms. Fauls for her dedicated work with the Legislature on behalf of FWC.

Vice Chairman Yablonski recognized Representative Pilon's Legislative Assistant, Ms. Pam Nickell, who was in attendance.

Foundation Update

Chairman Barreto provided an update on the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida.

Break

Joint South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Report

Ms. Jessica McCawley, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, and Ms. Martha Bademan, Section Leader with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, provided an update on discussions from the June 8-12, 2015 SAFMC and GMFMC joint meeting. Topics included: management of South Florida species, mackerel, red snapper season and management updates, gag grouper management options being considered by the Gulf Council, and various snapper grouper species. Staff requested direction on gag grouper management in Gulf federal waters based on the Gulf Council's current preferred management alternatives which would: not increase the gag grouper annual catch limit, remove the Dec. 3 through Dec. 31 closed season, and raise the recreational minimum size limit from 22 inches to 24 inches for both gag and black grouper.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Jerry Sansom, Executive Director with Organized Fishermen of Florida, addressed the Commission and thanked staff for their hard work on the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils. He noted his support for delegation to the Commission for certain species like yellowtail snapper, hogfish, and black grouper that are currently managed by the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils. He also noted the commercial dolphin closure in the Atlantic and suggested that there is a need to address the annual catch limits or sector allocation for that species.

Mr. Frank Chivas, a Tampa Bay area restaurant owner, addressed the Commission noting his opposition to sector reallocation of red snapper and requested the Commission not support that action. He added that the Gulf Council and NOAA Fisheries need to provide a better red snapper management plan for private anglers.

Mr. Trip Aukeman with the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) addressed the Commission and noted CCA's support of removing the Dec. 3 through Dec. 31 closed season on Gulf gag grouper. He also noted CCA's support for sector reallocation of red snapper.

Mr. Jason Delacruz, a wholesale seafood and recreational dock owner, addressed the Commission and asked for the FWC representative on the Council to help move plans forward to develop a management strategy for private recreational anglers. He noted that he opposes charter boats being included in any regional management plan because they have federal permits and are working within the federal system. He stated his opposition to sector reallocation of red snapper.

Mr. Bill Kelly with the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association addressed the Commission regarding his concerns of management delegation to the State of Florida from the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils for species like yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper. He noted that certain issues still need to be resolved before the commercial industry could support delegation of management. He also noted the commercial dolphin closure in the Atlantic and the negative impacts it will have on fishermen in the Florida Keys.

Commission Discussion

Executive Director Wiley provided some clarity on regional management, noting that regional management in the context of South Florida species is really a delegation of management from the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils to the State of Florida and this potential action is separate from discussions on regional management of red snapper which would delegate management to all five Gulf states.

Commissioner Roberts asked Ms. McCawley to clarify the direction staff requested.

Ms. McCawley responded with the request for direction on the three preferred alternatives the Council has selected on gag grouper management in Gulf federal waters which would: not increase the gag grouper annual catch limit, remove the Dec. 3 through Dec. 31 closed season, and raise the recreational minimum size limit from 22 inches to 24 inches for both gag and black grouper.

Commission Action

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

Items Requiring Action

Draft Rule – Barracuda

Ms. Melissa Recks, Section Leader with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management, presented a proposed draft rule related to Barracuda.

Commissioner Roberts asked if there were any workshops north of Collier and Monroe County and if staff had heard feedback about the status of the barracuda population in the northern parts of the state.

Ms. Recks responded that the in-person workshops were scheduled in South Florida based on Commission direction and in response to public concern about the species in that portion of the state. However, a webinar was held for stakeholders throughout the entire state to gather additional input. Feedback from the northern portions of the state indicated that the public felt the barracuda population outside South Florida was healthy.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Brett Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the Snook and Gamefish Foundation, addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation and suggested the commercial trip limit of 20 fish be expanded to a vessel limit in addition to being a per-person limit.

Mr. Charles Phillips, President of FGA, addressed the Commission in support of the proposed rules. He stated that members of the FGA in South Florida have noticed a decline in barracuda. He thanked the Commission for addressing management needs for a species that is not necessarily part of a high profile fishery, but is important to fishermen in the area.

Mr. Aaron Adams with the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust addressed the Commission in support of staff proposal. He suggested the commercial vessel limit of 20 fish per trip due to the decline in this species. He also requested the Commission consider starting with a narrower slot limit, including a higher minimum size. He noted concern for unreported sale of barracuda and for generally high levels of poaching of all species in South Florida. He requested additional enforcement in South Florida to combat this illegal activity.

Mr. Justin Grubich representing the Pew Charitable Trusts addressed the Commission in support of staff recommendation.

Mr. Trip Aukeman representing the Coastal Conservation Association addressed the Commission in support of the proposal with the addition of a commercial vessel limit of 20 or 40 fish per trip.

Mr. William Benson, vice president of the Lower Keys Guides Association addressed the Commission and thanked staff for reviewing this important issue for South Florida fishermen. He noted strong support for the proposal with the addition of a 20 fish per vessel commercial limit.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts to amend the recommendation to include a commercial vessel limit of 20, seconded by Commissioner Hanas and carried, the Commission approved staff recommendation.

Special Lionfish Removal Opportunity

Ms. Recks presented a proposed special opportunity for lobster harvesters to take an extra lobster by harvesting lionfish during the two-day lobster sport season (mini season).

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Bill Kelly addressed the Commission in opposition to this proposal due to safety concerns and enforcement issues. He made a proposal to separate the lionfish take from the lobster mini season by creating a lionfish derby earlier in the same week of the mini season.

Mr. Allie Elhage addressed the Commission in support of the proposal which would benefit his business: ZooKeeper containment devices used to store harvested lionfish while in the water. He sees this program as an educational opportunity to reach a large number of people during the lobster mini season and applauded FWC for its work on the lionfish issue.

Mr. Jerry Sansom echoed the concerns voiced by Mr. Kelly. He thanked staff for the aggressive approach in thinking how to address this issue. However, he noted another concern of sending individuals into the water during mini season with a gear type that is illegal for harvest of lobster but is promoted for harvest of lionfish. He suggested FWC begin thinking about initiating a program dedicated to lionfish removal in all areas of the waters of the State of Florida, both shallow and deep.

Commissioner Roberts asked Mr. Sansom's opinion on the proposed derby prior to mini season.

Mr. Sansom replied that he would have no opposition to the proposed lionfish derby.

Mr. Jason Delacruz addressed the Commission with support of the proposal. He noted the importance of safety when dealing with this venomous species.

Ms. Rachel Bowman addressed the Commission. She explained her experience as a professional lionfish harvester in the Keys. She added strong support for staff proposal.

Mr. Brett Fitzgerald addressed the Commission with concern over general safety if this proposal was approved. He noted this opportunity creates the awareness and education this topic needs, but does not address the major aspects of this tough problem.

Mr. Will Benson addressed the Commission in support of the proposal and commended staff for the out-of-the-box thinking, but does share Mr. Kelly's concerns about safety.

Mr. Bill Saguas addressed the Commission and noted that he annually participates in the mini season. He supports the additional proposal of the lionfish derby prior to the mini season to keep the two harvest opportunities separate.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Roberts asked Colonel Brown about the challenges regarding law enforcement.

Colonel Brown responded that proposed change would require law enforcement to conduct some additional officer training but that law enforcement staff can work through those issues if the proposal is approved.

Commissioner Priddy asked about having a lionfish derby prior to the mini season as well as allowing them to take the lionfish during mini season.

Ms. Recks noted that there are many partners in South Florida who would be willing to assist with this. Initiating a lionfish derby prior to mini season would require a larger staff effort than the current staff proposal.

Executive Director Wiley commented that we could stick with a simpler approach this year, but look at including a derby prior to mini season in future years.

Vice Chairman Yablonski added support for this innovative approach.

Commission Action

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

Staff Report – Marine Fish Management

Ms. McCawley along with Mr. Barbieri presented an overview of the Commission's research and management of forage fish. Staff recommended the Commission adopt a resolution in support of continued research and management of the forage fish fisheries.

Public Comment

The following individuals addressed the Commission on this agenda item:

Mr. Philip Chiochio addressed the Commission with a request to look at forage fish in a bigger picture because without forage fish there will be fewer grouper and fish of other species. He requested coordination with FWC in efforts to revitalize forage fish.

Mr. Bill Kelly addressed the Commission noting that forage fish are abundant in Monroe County and Biscayne National Park.

Mr. Jason Schratwieser on behalf of the International Game Fish Association addressed the Commission to express his compliments regarding the presentation and in support of the proposed resolution on this topic and expanding forage fish research.

Mr. Jerry Sansom addressed the Commission regarding the positive effect of proper management of forage fish on the entire ecosystem. He noted support of the proposed resolution even though there is not necessarily a problem here in Florida. He noted a concern with habitat loss on all levels of fishery management.

Mr. Don McCumber addressed the Commission in support of FWC past regulatory decisions which had a positive effect on the fishery.

Ms. Karen Bell addressed the Commission in support of staff proposed resolution.

Mr. Brett Fitzgerald addressed the Commission in support of the proposed resolution. He requested the Commission find ways to incorporate recreational angler data into data collection.

Mr. John Banyas addressed the Commission noting the fishery is stable and does not need any action at this time. He expressed support for the good work that FWRI does, including working together with the commercial industry.

Mr. Justin Grubich addressed the Commission in support of the proposed resolution and offered Pew Charitable Trusts' support to FWRI to help look for innovative solutions to improve data collection on forage fish.

Mr. Terry Gibson addressed the Commission in support of the proposed resolution. He echoed the concerns of Mr. Sansom regarding habitat quality declines, particularly in the Indian River Lagoon.

Mr. Mark Coarsey, President of Fishing Freedom Manatee County Chapter, addressed the Commission regarding the effect of habitat decline on forage fish. He added support of the proposed resolution.

Mr. Justin Bloom, Executive Director of Suncoast Waterkeeper, addressed the Commission in support of the proposed resolution.

Mr. William Benson, on behalf of the Lower Keys Guides Association, addressed the Commission in support of the proposed resolution.

Mr. Robert Aylesworth, of Aylesworth Fish and Bait, addressed the Commission regarding the fact that forage fish are in good shape in Florida and thanked staff for their efforts.

Mr. Mike Hodge addressed the Commission on behalf of the Snook Foundation in support of the proposed resolution to increase awareness regarding forage fish.

Mr. Rusty Chinnis, Board Member of Sarasota Bay Watch, addressed the Commission in support of the proposed resolution and echoed comments regarding habitat management.

Manley Fuller addressed the Commission in support of the proposed resolution.

Commission Action

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Priddy and carried, the Commission approved the proposed resolution.

Future Agenda Items

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

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

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

Mr. Jonathan Eddy with Beacon Fisheries addressed the Commission to request the Commission repeal the minimum size limits for imported reef fish

Mr. Frank Davis with Boca Grande Fishing Guides and Save the Tarpon addressed the Commission regarding Boca Grande Pass and Tarpon fishing, including concerns about the use of a new style of jig that he believes violates the spirit of the recent regulatory changes for that fishery.

Mr. Thomas McLaughlin with Save the Tarpon addressed the Commission. He commented on enforcement difficulties associated with Boca Grande Pass tarpon regulations. He asked the Commission to review the fishing practices in this area and monitor enforcement issues related to gear and poaching.

Mr. Jerry Sansom addressed the Commission with a request to reconstitute the blue crab advisory committee previously established by the Commission.

Mr. Jairo Hernandez addressed the Commission regarding importing fish as already addressed by Mr. Eddy. He noted concern for his business based out of Nicaragua where size limit rules are different than those of Florida which cause federal enforcement issues for business owners.

Mr. Bill Kelly addressed the Commission regarding recommendations from the industry's self-convened Stone Crab Advisory Board including changes to fees associated with the stone crab fishery and other changes to rules associated with stone crab. He also expressed concerns about increased use of untagged lobster traps.

Mr. Cappy Joiner, President of Boca Grande Fishing Guides Association, addressed the Commission regarding Tarpon in Boca Grande Pass. He proposed prohibiting use of all jigs in May and June in Boca Grande Pass which would help solve the problem.

Mr. Mark Futch addressed the Commission with concerns about fishermen that continue to snag tarpon in Boca Grande Pass.

Mr. Lane Stephens addressed the Commission to say that fishermen in Boca Grande Pass are abiding by the current gear regulations and that the fishery would welcome additional law enforcement.

Executive Director Wiley commented on some of the issues related to tarpon in Boca Grande Pass. He added that FWC appreciates the comments of the individuals here today and that we need to give law enforcement and the current regulations more time to work before considering further changes.

Commissioner Hanas noted his recent experience fishing in this area.

Special Recognition

Vice Chairman Yablonski recognized some of the important visions that Chairman Corbett has brought to this Commission over his three terms.

Chairman Corbett thanked everyone for the comments, and staff and partners for the wonderful gift of the tribute video.

Elections

Mr. Bud Vielhauer noted the annual requirement of election of a Chairman.

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to elect Vice Chairman Yablonski as the new Chairman and Commissioner Priddy as the new Vice Chairman, seconded by Commissioner Hanas and carried.

Commission Administrative Matters

The next regularly scheduled Commission meeting is set for September 2 – 3, 2015 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, commencing at 8:30 a.m. each day.

Adjournment

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.

Brian Yablonski
Chairman

Nick Wiley
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

Lisa Zullo
Commission Assistant