



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting
June 13-14, 2007
Melbourne

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission was held at the Radisson Hotel, 3101 North Highway A1A, Melbourne, Florida, June 13-14, 2007, and called to order at 8:30 a.m., by Chairman Rodney Barreto with the following members in attendance:

Mr. David K. Meehan, St. Petersburg

Ms. Kathy Barco, Jacksonville

Mr. H. A. "Herky" Huffman, Enterprise

Mr. Brian Yablonski, Tallahassee

Mr. Richard Corbett, Tampa

Mr. Dwight Stephenson, Delray Beach

Staff

Mr. Kenneth D. Haddad

Executive Director

Mr. Victor J. Heller

Assistant Executive Director

Mr. James V. Antista

General Counsel

Colonel Julie L. Jones

Director, Division of Law Enforcement

Mr. Nick Wiley

Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management

Mr. Timothy Breault

Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

Mr. Mark S. Robson

Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

Mr. Gil McRae

Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Ms. Jacqueline Fauls

Director, Legislative Affairs Office

Ms. Sandra Wilson

Director, Office of Finance and Budget

Ms. Mary Ann Poole

Director, Office of Policy and Stakeholder Coordination

Mr. Dennis David

Director, Northeast Region

Mr. Gregory L. Holder

Director, Southwest Region

Mr. Rolando J. Garcia

Director, North Central Region

Lt. Col. Louie S. Roberson

Director, Northwest Region

124 persons registered as guests/speakers during the two-day meeting.

Chairman Barreto welcomed the Commissioners, staff, and guests to Melbourne.

Regional Director Rolando Garcia gave the invocation. Commissioner Huffman led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman Barreto welcomed the new Commissioner Dwight Stephenson replacing Commissioner Sandra Kaupe. Commissioner Stephenson thanked Chairman Barreto and the Commissioners and stated he is looking forward to working with the agency.

Special Presentations and Recognition

Chairman Barreto asked Colonel Julie Jones to present the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (Commission) Outstanding Prosecutor of the Year Award to Assistant State Attorney Ryan Butler of Indian River County. The Chairman presented a plaque to Mr. Butler and thanked him for his assistance with the prosecution of fish and wildlife law violators. Mr. Butler spoke about the strong partnership with the Commission and the state attorney's office and thanked the Commission for recognizing his work.

Chairman Barreto asked Ken Haddad to introduce employees from the Northeast Region. Mr. Haddad introduced the following employees to the Commission: Law Enforcement—Lt. Jeff Sidor and Mary Sargent; Habitat and Species Conservation—Robin Boughton, Jeremy Olson and Richard Burst; and Fish and Wildlife Research Institute—Dr. Richard Paperno.

Approval of Minutes and Agenda

Chairman Barreto asked for approval of the minutes of the April 11-12, 2007 Commission meeting. Upon motion of Commissioner Huffman, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the minutes.

Chairman Barreto called for a motion to approve the two-day meeting agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the meeting agenda.

Chairman Barreto called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as advertised. Vic Heller described the two items listed on the Consent Agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Huffman, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the Consent Agenda.

Executive Director's Report

Chairman Barreto asked Mr. Haddad to present the Executive Director's Report. Mr. Haddad summarized the General Management Plan Alternatives for the Big Cypress National Preserve Addition. Staff participated in all phases of the planning process required by the National Park Service to open the 147,000-acre Big Cypress National Preserve Addition to public recreational access and they are now providing comments and recommendations regarding the General Management Plan for the Addition to finalize a decision regarding the preferred alternative for the General Management Plan, which will set the parameters for providing public access for the next 15 to 20 years. Mr. Haddad gave a brief summary of the agency's comments for submission to the National Park Service.

Mr. Haddad continued the Executive Director's Report with a summary of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation's staff involvement in the statewide wildland firefighting efforts. As of May 16, 28 wildlife technicians and wildlife biologists, along with 11 agency brush trucks and one dozer/plow unit, were used to fight fires. These employees are on a 14-day call-up deployment. Most of these resources are serving on wildfire strike teams in Collier, Bradford, and Hamilton counties. Strike teams consist of a strike team leader and between one and four brush trucks with two wildland firefighters per truck. Staff presented a video including the agency's involvement in the statewide fires.

Mr. Breault presented a brief summary on the fire safety technician's training, the equipment used to fight the fires, tracking fires, and the status of the fires. Commissioner Corbett asked about the Red Hills area and the Farm Bill as an opportunity to access funds to prevent forest fires. Mr. Breault discussed habitat restoration and access to additional funding.

The Commissioners discussed controlled burning and the positive effects to wildlife's habitat.

Chairman Barreto announced the Commission meeting protocol recognizing public comment.

Final Rules

Chairman Barreto asked Nick Wiley to present proposed rule changes regarding possession of guns for Commission managed areas under the following rule titles:

- 68A-15.004, General Regulations Relating to Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's)
- 68A-17.004, General Regulations Relating to Wildlife and Environmental Areas (WEA's)
- 68A-20.004, Regulations in Fish Management Areas (FMA's)

Mr. Wiley stated the proposed rules would establish regulations allowing the possession of guns while traveling to private inholdings in WMA's, WEA's, or FMA's or to access private holdings adjacent to WMA's, WEA's or FMA's if the only access to the private holding is across FWC managed areas. Staff recommended the Commission approve the proposed Rules 68A-15.004, 68A-17.004 and 68A-20.004 as advertised.

Public Comment

Al Hammond (National Rifle Association) supported staff's proposed rules.

Byron Meharrey (Everglades Coordinating Council) welcomed Commissioner Stephenson to the agency. He stated his concerns regarding long guns as this might cause potential dangers with hunters. In addition, he commented on the Addition Land and stated none of the alternatives are acceptable to the members of the Council and request total access to the Addition Land.

Upon motion of Commissioner Yablonski, seconded and carried, the Commission approved Rules 68A-15.004, 68A-17.004, and 68A-20.004 as advertised.

Draft Rules-Commercialization Captive Wildlife; Public Contact; Bonding

Chairman Barreto asked Colonel Jones to present draft Rule 68A-6.0024, Commercialization Captive Wildlife; Public Contact; Bonding. The proposed draft rule would establish bonding requirements for the exhibition of Class I wildlife and venomous reptiles, which is contingent upon signature of the bill by Governor Crist in the 2007 Legislative Session. Staff asked the Commission to approve the draft rule and advertise the rule for final public hearing and adoption at the September 2007 Commission meeting.

Chairman Barreto thanked Commissioner Huffman for his participation with captive wildlife issues.

Public Comment

Susan Williams requested the Commission modify the regulations to include a requirement for proof of commercial activity of all Class I permit holders, frequent inspections of the permit holder's facility and require tracking devices for all Class I species if they were to escape. She provided a handout to the Commissioners referencing her comments.

Dr. Jennifer Hobgood (The Humane Society of the United States) supported staff's recommendations on draft rule 68A-6.0024.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Barreto asked Col. Jones to meet with Ms. Williams in consideration of including her recommendations regarding Class I permit holders. Col. Jones discussed future draft rules to include consideration of Ms. Williams' proposals.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Meehan, seconded and carried, the Commission approved draft Rule 68A-6.0024 and directed staff to advertise the rule for final public hearing and adoption at the September 2007 Commission meeting.

Issue – Peregrine Falcon

Mr. Breault summarized the action on the active listing petition for the peregrine falcon. Staff asked the Commission to approve a biological review panel and develop a timeline to evaluate the petition for changing the listing category of the peregrine falcon. The smooth-billed ani petition will be presented at a future Commission meeting once the work plan for the peregrine falcon is finalized.

Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved directing staff to complete a biological review panel and develop a timeline to evaluate the petition for changing the listing category of the peregrine falcon.

Issue – Overview of Imperiled Species Management Plan Processes

Mr. Breault presented a high-level review of the Commission's listing process. The draft management plans presented will include the Florida manatee, Panama City crayfish, and the gopher tortoise. The bald eagle plan is currently open for public comment and staff plans to revise that draft and bring it to the September meeting. Staff made a recommendation that would require any substantive revisions to the management plans to be brought to the Commission for consideration.

Chairman Barreto thanked Mr. Breault and staff on behalf of the Commission for their efforts in drafting the imperiled species management plans.

Public Comment

Dr. Edward Passerini (Southern Alliance for Clean Energy) expressed his concerns regarding the statistical information on manatee death rates and opposed downlisting the Florida manatee from endangered to threatened.

Pat Rose (Save the Manatee Club) stated that accountability is critical to the success of management plans, yet one of the challenges is the lack of funding options.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Barco asked Mr. Breault about the accountability measures included in the plans. Mr. Breault stated the Plans include measures and staff is prepared to approach concerns regarding accountability.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Meehan, seconded and carried, the Commission approved directing staff to return at the September 2007 Commission meeting with any substantial changes in any of the imperiled species management plans.

Chairman Barreto introduced Andrew Grogan, Legislative Assistant for Representative Ralph Poppell and thanked him for attending the meeting.

Florida Manatee Draft Management Plan

Chairman Barreto reminded the public that the meeting would include presentations of draft management plans with public comments to follow each presentation. Chairman Barreto asked Kipp Frohlich to present the Florida Manatee Draft Management Plan (Plan). Mr. Frohlich presented the goal, objectives, proposed regulations, permitting framework, management actions, implementation, and economic impacts of the Plan. He stated the goal of the plan is to remove the Florida manatee from the state imperiled species list and effectively manage the population in perpetuity throughout Florida by securing habitat and minimizing threats. Staff recommended the Commission provide conceptual approval of the Management Plan and rules; and bring the plans and rules for final public hearing at the September Commission meeting.

Public Comment

The following individuals supported the Florida Manatee Draft Management Plan (Plan):

Ron Rincones (Coastal Conservation Association); Steven Webster, Dave Pasley, George and Sandra Reynolds, Robert Smith, Francesca Kyriakou, Lt. Col. John Kendrick, and Jim Rosasco (Citizens for Florida Waterways); Delores Kane; Bob Atkins; Gary Hanlin; Bob Wille; Winifred Perkins (Florida Power and Light); Jack and Carole Snyder; Jessica Koelsch (The Ocean Conservancy); and Lisa Neal.

Bonnie Basham (Boat U.S.) asked the Commission to review several issues listed within the Florida Manatee Management Plan: issuing a guidance document for at-risk counties, which is a thin line between a guidance document and a rule; missing cumulative impacts; freshwater versus saltwater fishing guides permits; and the economic impact chapter should be researched closer.

Ted Forsgren (Coastal Conservation Association) provided a handout with recommended modifications to the Florida Manatee Management Plan. He supported the plan with recommended modifications.

Jim Gray (Coastal Conservation Association) discussed the manatee population in the southwest area.

The following individuals did not support the Florida Manatee Draft Management Plan (Plan):

Bob Bridges; Katie Tripp; Suzanne Valencia; Paul Ragusa; Elizabeth Fleming (Defenders of Wildlife); Nancy Seduski, Deborah Lyn Brown, Kelly Novic, Jessie Gilmartin, Eliana Campos, Kate Cassim, and Pat Rose (Save the Manatee Club); Kathleen Bennett (Cocoa Beach Kayaking); J. Kevin Hertell (The Pegasus Foundation); Erin Hellkamp; Dr. Jennifer Hobgood; Douglas Brown; George and Majel Legters; and Janice and Terry Nearing.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Barreto asked Mr. Frohlich to respond to some of the public comments made before the Commissioners discuss the issue further. Mr. Frohlich responded to a number of public comments made and reiterated the agency's position regarding the Plan.

Chairman Barreto congratulated Mr. Frohlich, Carol Knox and staff for their efforts in drafting the Florida Manatee Management Plan.

Vice Chairman Meehan stated the speaker has mentioned a reduction in protection and asked Mr. Frohlich if the Plan reduces protection in any way. Mr. Frohlich stated the Plan does not include a reduction. Commissioner Meehan asked that staff clarify the non-rule language, define warm water protection, and increase boater safety.

Commissioner Yablonski asked if there is more or less action to protect the Florida manatee. Mr. Frohlich stated there are measures to protect the manatee, especially in the warm water areas. In addition, Commissioner Yablonski asked Mr. Frohlich if the nuclear power plants produce warm water in areas of the state. Mr. Frohlich and Ms. Perkins from Progress Energy stated that while nuclear plants do use water for cooling, no new plants, nuclear or fossil fuels would discharge into water of the state that would be accessible to manatees.

Commissioner Barco stated a speaker mentioned the cumulative impact of commercial traffic, boat ramps and asked about the socio-economic impact. Mr. Frohlich addressed the term cumulative and socio-economic impacts related to the Plan. Commissioner Barco encouraged staff to re-evaluate the Plan every year for necessary adjustments.

Commissioner Huffman discussed the past flaws in the statistical data related to Florida manatee and shared his support of the proposed Plan.

Commissioners Corbett and Stephenson complimented Mr. Frohlich and his staff for their efforts in providing the Florida Manatee Draft Management Plan.

Chairman Barreto asked the public to work with the agency in providing comments regarding the Plan in order to continue the success story of protecting and conserving the Florida manatee.

Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the Florida Manatee Draft Management Plan and draft Rules 68A-27.003 and Rule 68A-27.004 to change its listing category; and directed staff to advertise the rules for a final public hearing at the September 2007 Commission meeting.

Panama City Crayfish Draft Management Plan

Mr. Louie Roberson presented the Panama City Crayfish Draft Management Plan (Plan). He summarized the goal, specific areas of Panama City in Bay County where crayfish are located, objectives, proposed regulations, permitting framework, management actions, implementation, and economic impacts of the Plan. The Plan would provide conservation actions that ultimately allow us to remove the Panama City

crayfish from Florida's imperiled species list. Staff had planned to recommend the Commission approve the conceptual Plan and rules; and present the Plan and rules for final public hearing at the September Commission meeting. However, staff was approached to delay the final approval of the Plan until the February 2008 Commission meeting as it is scheduled in Panama City; rather than at the September 2007 Commission meeting in St. Petersburg.

Public Comment

Elizabeth Fleming (Defenders of Wildlife) complimented the staff for their efforts in coordinating the Plan. She stated her concerns regarding the harvesting of crayfish, which is a threatened species in the area for bait.

Douglas Rillstone (Florida Home Builders Association) congratulated staff for providing the Plan to the public for comment and stated his concerns.

Commission Discussion

Mr. Haddad stated the Commission does not want to set a precedent that an issue should be delayed due to the location of the issue, such as the Panama City crayfish.

Commissioner Yablonski reviewed the regulations of the Plan. St. Joe Company is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a candidate conservation agreement to protect the Panama City crayfish practices policies.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Meehan, seconded and carried, the Commission conceptually approved the Panama City Crayfish Draft Management Plan and draft rules to change its listing category; and advertise these for a final public hearing at the February 2008 Commission meeting.

Policy to End Entombment of Gopher Tortoises

Chairman Barreto asked Greg Holder to present the proposed policy to end entombment of gopher tortoises for Commission consideration and approval. The presentation included information on the current tortoise program along with an explanation of an interim policy change to the "Incidental Take" permit. The interim policy deletes the current permit provision, which authorizes incidental take that may result in entombment, replacing it with a provision that requires tortoise relocation. The change is needed to reduce gopher tortoise mortality during the period required to implement the permitting system proposed in the Gopher Tortoise Draft Management Plan. Staff recommended adopting the policy effective July 30, 2007.

Public Comment

The following individuals supported the policy to end entombment of gopher tortoise:

Suzanne Valencia; Laura Guttridge (Vero Beach Humane Society); Dolores Kane; Dr. Ray Ashton (Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative); Dr. David Auth (Florida Chapter of Sierra Club); J. Kevin Hertell; Boyd Blihorde (Gopher Tortoise Council); Jessica Koelsch; Maureen Rupe (Partnership for a Sustainable Future); Rebecca Egan; Douglas Rillstone; Alan Berger; and Mary Hillberg.

Laurie McDonald (Defenders of Wildlife) suggested the Commission look into resources for additional staff to implement the policy during this transition period. She stated she did not feel there should be any grandfathering of incidental take permits.

Dr. Jennifer Hobgood commended the agency for their efforts in ending entombment of gopher tortoises and supported staff recommended policy. She stated they do not support grandfathering for those with take permit before July 30, 2007.

Ilka Daniel (Humane Society of Vero Beach) thanked agency staff for incorporating public comment into the Plan. She suggested the language listed in the plan under Permitting 1, (a) pertaining to “5 and fewer” mirror the other imperiled species plans’ language under 1, (b) requiring an authorized agent be notified to ensure a strong conservation base. In addition, she is against the grandfathering incidental take permit holders.

Dr. Jon Moore (Florida Atlantic University) urged sustaining grandfathering of gopher tortoise permit holders and converse those to relocation permits to halt further destruction of species at risk.

Doug Doudney (Coalition for Property Rights) appealed to the Commission to urge landowners to participate in the gopher tortoise relocation process.

Cynthia Meketa (Kissimmee Valley Audubon) supported the uplisting of gopher tortoise, the interim entombment policy, and she is against the grandfathering of the existing incidental take permits.

Colonel Wilson the agency should stop issuing incidental take permits, stop honoring permits already issued by September 2007 FWC must raise the gopher tortoise status to threatened and approve a gopher tortoise plan that ends current incidental take policy, put penalties in place for them and require that they be relocated humanely.

Ben Henschel urged the Commission to dramatically reduce the cost to entomb tortoises.

Dan Stengle (Hopping Green and Sams) discussed his client’s concerns regarding the grandfathering permit issue.

Steve Godley stated developers do not want to continue to the entombment of tortoises, yet a disease found in gopher tortoises kept contractors from relocating the species to another site.

Ron Concabee (Mosaic Fertilizer) stated there are other species of concern that are buried when the gopher tortoise habitat is buried.

Dr. Rhinata Snyder supported the policy and is against the grandfathering incidental take permit holders

The following individuals did not support the policy to end entombment of gopher tortoise:

Carol Saviak (Coalition for Property Rights) suggested the effective date of July 30, 2007 be extended for the public (landowners) to react to the new policy.

Commission Discussion

Mr. Holder provided a summary of the gopher tortoise interim entombment policy.

Chairman Barreto stated this interim plan is a big step in stopping the entombment of gopher tortoises. The real debate is grandfathering current permit holders. Many private landowners see that as a business opportunity.

Commissioner Yablonski stated the Commission could control permit applications by setting the amount of tortoises per acre. Mr. Holder agreed the issue is site availability.

Commissioner Corbett asked about the relocation of gopher tortoises. Mr. Holder discussed the types of tortoises appropriate for relocation per acre and the land available for this purpose.

Chairman Barreto asked Mr. Holder how staff determines if a private landowner qualifies for the relocation process. Mr. Holder stated an environmental consultant is hired to study the property to determine if the land qualifies.

Chairman Barreto asked for a motion to stop the entombment of gopher tortoises. Upon motion of Commissioner Yablonski, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the policy for adoption effective July 30, 2007.

Commissioner Yablonski asked Mr. Holder if the standardization of three gopher tortoises per acre could be changed. Mr. Holder stated the real question is responsible relocation threshold.

Commissioner Corbett recommended two to four gopher tortoises per acre and provides staff the ability to determine the flexibility.

Commissioner Huffman discussed the sustainability of the land.

Joan Barrish presented a summary clarifying the gopher tortoise stock assessment for relocation, the sustainability of land and the amount of tortoises per acre.

Commissioner Barco asked Mr. Holder to provide an overview on the stock assessment of gopher tortoises. She stated she would advise increasing the stock density of some land as appropriate. The two per acre and adding three on is the interim. The public would like to look further into responsible relocation.

Commissioner Barco discussed the cost involved in relocating gopher tortoises in reference to the Commission changing the policy asking the landowner to withstand the worst of the financial cost. She stated the Commission should withstand the worst of the cost to relocate gopher tortoises. She clarified that inside the trust fund are funds to handle the management of tortoises.

Chairman Barreto discussed his concerns regarding the “grandfathering” provisions language within the proposed policy. Chairman Barreto asked staff to provide a report to Commissioners at the September Commission meeting clarifying the “grandfathering” issue.

Upon motion of Commissioner Huffman, seconded and carried, the Commission approved directing staff to provide a report at the September Commission meeting clarifying the “grandfathering” of current permit holders in addition to any other issues that may arise.

Gopher Tortoise Draft Management Plan

Mr. Holder presented the Gopher Tortoise Draft Management Plan (Plan) to reclassify the gopher tortoise from a Species of Special Concern to a Threatened species. He gave an overview of the draft management plan with an explanation of the conservation goal, measurable objectives, conservation actions, draft rules, proposed permitting system, implementation strategy, and economic impact. Staff recommended the Commission approve the conceptual gopher tortoise management plan and rules; and bring plans and rules for final public hearing at the September Commission meeting.

Public Comment

The following individuals supported the Gopher Tortoise Draft Management Plan:

Dr. Jennifer Hobgood; Walter Thomason (The Nature Conservancy); Boyd Blihoude; Charles Barrowdough (Martin County Environmental Lands); Rebecca Eagan (Gopher Tortoise Stakeholder Group Steering Committee); Suzanne Valencia; Frank Kaiser (Home Builders Association of Brevard County); Sue Darden (Volusia Home Builders Association); Keith Hetrick (Florida Home Builders Association); and Ron Conskibee.

Greg Blose (Volusia Home Builders Association) stated his concerns regarding where the gopher tortoises should be relocated.

Laurie McDonald thanked staff for the amount of work devoted to the gopher tortoise management plan and offered her support.

Dr. Rhinata Snyder supported the plan and offered her organization's assistance and comments as the plan proceeds.

Dr. Jon Moore stated there are more tortoises on sites than what is reported and a great deal of mitigation funds have been lost due to this inaccuracy. He urged the Commission to inspect the environmental consultant's data and supported the plan.

Dr. David Auth (Sierra Club) commended the agency for providing all of the management plans online for the public to review and submit comment. The Club supported staff's recommendation.

Doug Doudney stated the U.S. Supreme Court rendered in 1964 the Armstrong Decision, and part of the language includes a definition of what a "taking" is, stating whenever a private individual is required to produce a public good at private cost. Therefore, the gopher tortoise laws have been wrong-headed.

Corey Deal provided a handout and discussed the data including the cost to relocate gopher tortoises.

Steve Godley (Biological Research Associates) supported the plan and suggested modifications. He also advocated the agency contract with economists to review the data further.

Doug Rillstone supported the plan with suggested modifications.

The following individuals did not support the Gopher Tortoise Management Plan:

Carol Saviak; Laura Rodziwicz; Dolores Kane; and Dr. Ray Ashton.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Yablonski asked about the fiscal impact to relocate gopher tortoises. Mr. Holder stated he was not able to obtain a satisfactory answer prior to Commission meeting; however he will follow up to obtain this information after the meeting.

Commissioner Barco asked if there are public access restrictions added to gopher tortoise habitat. Mr. Breault stated the land used by the Commission is open for public access for recreational use.

Vice Chairman Meehan asked if there is more information to implement into the Plan. Mr. Holder stated there is recognition to be done. He reiterated that FWC is the lead agency with other statewide agencies regarding the regulations and rules included in the Plan.

Commissioner Yablonski stated local government could get involved in the relocation effort. Mr. Haddad stated the agency has not worked like some other governmental agencies with regard to permitting.

Chairman Barreto stated Governor Crist has asked that documents be simple and easy to read. He asked that staff present the final management plan as stated in the "Plain Language" guide.

Commissioner Barco asked about local government's involvement in the permitting process. Mr. Holder replied that the public is concerned regarding local government involvement.

Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the conceptual Gopher Tortoise Draft Management Plan and the draft rules to change its listing category, and advertise these for a final public hearing at the September 2007 Commission meeting.

Commissioner Yablonski recommended an amendment to the Gopher Tortoise Management Plan pursuant to government involvement. Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved amending the Plan.

Additionally Commissioner Yablonski recommended other state and local government lands. Mr. Holder stated this is already part of the Plan.

Vice Chairman Meehan asked for a status report on the gopher tortoise Trust Fund. Mr. Haddad discussed the Fund, how the agency requests land acquisitions and the permitting process.

Alligator Management Program

Chairman Barreto asked Harry Dutton, Section Leader, Alligator Management Program with the Division of Hunting and Game Management to present a review of the alligator management program. Mr. Dutton reviewed the recent alligator program assessment and the draft program modifications proposed as a result of the program reassessment. He discussed the purpose of the program; a survey of a web-based survey conducted in September 2006 and the results; a summary of public input through workshops held in February and March 2007; and the draft proposals; which include the following: conservation, recreational harvests, commercial harvests, education, financial, and research/science support. The agency plans to provide feedback to meeting participants on ideas that are not supported and develop rule change proposals necessary to address draft proposals requiring rule changes and consider the need for additional public meetings on draft proposals.

Public Comment

Joy Ann Wettstein Griffin commended Mr. Dutton for his work with the Alligator Stakeholder group. She provided a letter including her concerns and a newspaper article regarding how the drought affects alligators and urged the Commission not to change any of the alligator regulations.

Curtis Lucas (Nuisance Alligator Trapper) discussed his concerns regarding short and long-term challenges with homeowners taking the alligators without contacting the trappers, which would lessen the integrity of the trapper program.

Elizabeth Fleming discussed her concerns regarding opening up alligator hunting statewide, which may remove the ability for the agency to monitor the program.

Bill Robb (Nuisance Alligator Trapper) supported staff's recommendation and expressed his concerns regarding the program.

Nick Atwood (Animal Rights Foundation of Florida) supported the staff recommended alligator management program and discussed his concerns regarding the public safety aspect.

Bishop Wright, Jr. (Florida Sportsmen Conservation Association) stated he was against the 24-hour hunting schedule, the use of a handgun during an alligator hunt, and expressed his experience in purchasing an alligator-hunting permit on June 12. He invited Commissioners to their alligator kick-off party at Bellgay Marina to open the alligator-hunting season.

Byron Meharrey thanked the Commission for listening to his suggestion to limit online sales to one for the first phase and increase every hour going forward. He discussed various concerns related to alligator hunting, hunting fees and alligator egg collection.

Chad Wright did not support staff's recommendation.

Jimmy Douglas, Jr. stated the smaller sized (under four feet) alligators should be left to the nuisance trappers, opposed setting bait hooks for alligators, the chance of over harvesting alligators, and the use of hand guns to kill alligators.

Johnny Douglas supported staff's recommendation and recommended the four feet and smaller alligators should be trapped by professional nuisance trappers and the use of handguns on alligator hunts.

Commission Discussion

Mr. Wiley asked the Commission to provide staff feedback and guidance. Chairman Barreto stated his opposition to the following: general public involved in the capture and trapping of the four-foot alligator, the use of the handgun, and 24-hour hunting.

Commissioner Barco stated the permits should be provided by county.

Chairman Barreto asked Mr. Wiley about unused permits in 2006. Mr. Wiley stated there was an 80% fill rate of the tags in 2006.

Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission directed and approved staff to: (1) inform the public and alligator program stakeholders of the proposals supported by the Commission; (2) develop draft rules and/or legislation to implement the program changes; (3) hold public hearings as needed; and (4) schedule conceptual draft rules for consideration in September, draft rules in December, and schedule a final public hearing in February 2008.

Vice Chairman Meehan asked staff to provide media with the proper message regarding the Commission's decision regarding the alligator management program.

Land Acquisitions

Mr. Breault presented the following recommended land acquisitions:

- The Nature Conservancy's Davidson parcel as a Mitigation Park under FWC's Land Acquisition Trust Fund and Fish and Wildlife Habitat Acquisition Program.
- The Nature Conservancy's Janet Butterfield Brooks Preserve parcel via donation as a Mitigation Park under FWC's Land Acquisition Trust Fund and Fish and Wildlife Habitat Acquisition Program
- Adding two parcels adjoining the Chinsegut Wildlife and Environmental Area to FWC's Florida Forever acquisition list.
- Two Nature Conservancy parcels via donation as additions to the Chinsegut Wildlife and Environmental Area under FWC's Florida Forever Inholdings and Additions Acquisition Program.

Additionally, Mr. Breault proposed the following:

- Commission Delegation of Final Approval for Acquisition Agreements exceeding \$250,000 to the Executive Director, upon notice to the Commission, until the September 2007 Commission meeting.

Public Comment

Byron Meharrey asked staff about the non-consumptive aspect of the parcels.

Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the proposed the above listed land acquisitions and delegation of authority.

Chairman Barreto called for the motion to move agenda item 5, under Commissioners' Areas of Emphasis, "Update on the Florida Legacy Initiative" to Thursday, June 14. Upon motion of Commissioner Huffman, seconded and carried, the Commission approved amending the agenda.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

Todd Hallman (Florida Sportsmen Conservation Association) discussed the alcohol and trash problem in Hungry Land.

Richard Van Munster discussed his concerns regarding the net limit regulations.

Sharon Tyson (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) asked the Commission for additional research on the affects of the breeding female or soft-shell crab fishery. Chairman Barreto asked Ms. Tyson to meet with Gil McRae.

Byron Meharrey discussed the options provided by the Big Cypress and the deer management plan.

Bishop Wright, Jr. supported individuals 16 years and younger should not have to buy a \$50 trappers license and make it exempt. Chairman Barreto agreed that this would be a good idea and asked Mr. Wright to research this option. Mr. Wright commented on several rule developments.

Commission Exchange

Commissioner Yablonski thanked Mr. Holder, Mr. Frohlich, and Lt. Col. Roberson for the time they devoted briefing each of the Commissioners on the gopher tortoise, Panama City crayfish, and Florida manatee draft management plans.

Commissioners Barco, Huffman, and Vice Chairman Meehan stated it had been a very productive meeting.

Chairman Barreto welcomed Commissioner Stephenson and reiterated the Commissioner's sentiments to the success of the decisions related to the imperiled species management plans. In addition, he thanked Mr. Haddad for his input and devotion to the issues covered in the meeting.

Recess

Chairman Barreto recessed the meeting at 8:00 p.m. to reconvene at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, June 14.

Chairman Barreto reconvened the meeting at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, June 14 and introduced the new Commissioner, Dwight Stephenson.

Chairman Barreto asked Gil McRae to present the first item, which was a short video on this year's 13th Annual MarineQuest event held at the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in St. Petersburg. Mr. McRae announced next year's dates of April 17-19 and invited the Commissioners.

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative

Chairman Barreto asked Kate Haley, Coordinator of the Florida Wildlife Legacy Initiative (Program) to present an update to the Commission. Ms. Haley reviewed the current status of the Program including the five goals and objectives, with a detailed review of the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint effort. This review included description of the Century Commission and the Critical Lands/Waters Identification Project; key opportunities and challenges, and the three C's of the program: communicate, coordinate, and collaborate.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Meehan asked Ms. Haley to clarify the initiatives' partnerships with the Century Commission.

Commissioner Huffman stated he attended the Stakeholder conference in Orlando and mentioned the agency received national recognition for its efforts.

Commissioner Corbett asked Mr. Haddad to discuss his perspective of the Program. Mr. Haddad described the process of the initiative, including partnerships as the lead on this project and the importance of planning the future of Florida's wildlife.

Commissioner Yablonski discussed the difference in the two maps provided in the presentation and the importance in working with large landowners providing incentives to continue participation for the future.

Vice Chairman Meehan asked about the devotion of agency staff. Ms. Haley stated a number of agency staff is assisting with the facilitation and research on the project.

Final Rules – Blue Crab Effort Management Program

Chairman Barreto asked Bill Sharp, Biological Administrator III with the Division of Marine Fisheries Management to present the final public hearing on the blue crab management program. Mr. Sharp provided a presentation on final Rules 68BER07-01, Emergency Reinstatement of Blue Crab Endorsement, Moratorium and Suspension of Implementation of the Blue Crab Effort Management Program; 68B-45.004, Regulation and Prohibition of Certain Harvesting Gear; and 68B-45.007, Blue Crab Effort Management Program. Currently, the Program has been approved by the Legislature and is awaiting the approval of the Governor. Staff prepared alternative rule recommendations depending on whether or not the Program is approved. If the status of the Program is finalized prior to June's commission meeting, staff will update this report. Mr. Sharp presented several options based on the Governor's decision. Staff recommended the following options and asked the Commission to approve Option 1 or 2, depending on the action by Governor Crist:

If the Governor signs the bill:

- Option 1: Staff will amend existing rule language to update key dates to ensure the smooth implementation of the Blue Crab Effort Management Program.

If the Governor does not sign the bill:

- Option 2: Staff will extend the present moratorium on blue crab endorsements for one year, delay the implementation of the Blue Crab Effort Management Program for one year, and amend key dates in the Program's rule language to reflect a July 1, 2008 implementation date.
- Option 3: Staff will not make any changes to the blue crab rule. Allow the moratorium to expire on June 30, 2007 and be replaced by the Effort Management Program without fees and penalties on July 1, 2007.
- Option 4: Staff will modify the existing rule by delaying the implementation of the Blue Crab Effort Management Program until July 1, 2008, continue moratorium on blue crab endorsements, but allow transfer of the endorsement with a provision that the blue crab landings history associated with endorsement also transfers.
- Option 5: Allow the endorsement moratorium to expire on June 30, 2007; allow anyone to engage in commercial blue crabbing provided he has a valid saltwater products license, restricted species endorsement, and a blue crab endorsement.

Public Comment

Raymond King stated his concerns about the continuation of extending the program if the Governor does not approve the bill. Mr. Haddad stated the agency would continue to present to the Legislature and take the lead to get this issue resolved.

Commission Discussion

Mr. Haddad stated the bill is combined with the recreational license fee bill for the Governor's review and approval.

Upon motion of Commissioner Yablonski, seconded and carried, the Commission approved staff's recommendation.

Final Rules – Snook Regulations

Ms. McCawley presented the final public hearing on the snook issue. She recognized the following individuals from the Snook Working Group in attendance at the meeting:

Ted Forsgren
Curtis Bostick
Tom Fraser
Sue Cocking
Pat Kelly
Kevin McCole
Rick Roberts
Roger Birt

Ms. McCawley described the action requested by the Commission at the April 2005 Commission meeting to proceed to a final public hearing for snook that would modify the existing closed season on the Gulf coast, the size limit on both coasts, the bag limit on the Atlantic coast, and the number of cast nets allowed on board a vessel. The purpose of these rule amendments is to protect the snook resources in Florida by trying to achieve the Commission's management goal of 40% spawning potential ratio (SPR). Staff recommended approving Rules 68B-21.004, 68B -21.005, 68B-21.006, 68B-21.007 (3), 68B-21.0015, and 68B-21.003; and if approved, would take effect as soon as possible following the Commission meeting.

Public Comment

The following speakers supported staff's recommendation:

Gary Burdette; Tony Mead; Jim Gray, James Holder; Ted Forsgren (Coastal Conservation Association-CCA); Bill Bird; John Pinler; Captain Pat Kelly (Florida Guides Association); Rick Roberts (Snook Foundation); Curtis Bostick; Kevin McCole and Thomas Fraser (Snook Working Group); Sue Cocking (*Miami Herald*); Steven Webster; Mike Carter and Dave Exley.

Rodney Van Horn suggested the Commission provide an "all-in-one" saltwater fishing license to the public.

The following speakers did not support staff's recommendation:

Roger Birt (Snook Working Group); Greg and Shiela Simmons; Tom Lewis; Ron Rincones; Rodney Smith; Brian Combs; Richard Catri; Ron McCombs; Megan Simpson; Rick Matthis; Michael Miller; John Fender; Mike Maher; and James David (Board of County Commissioners – St. Lucie).

Robert Gray suggested building a hatchery in the Ft. Pierce area to alleviate the loss of the snook population.

Some speakers were in favor of a 1-fish bag limit on the East coast, but opposed to the slot limit change on the East coast

Robert Gray; Austin Evans; Eric Metcalf; Pam Gardner; and Rodney Van Horn

Commission Discussion

Chairman Barreto asked Mark Robson to address several issues brought to the Commission by the public, including the data provided by Dr. Muller and the public comment stating the scientific data provided by the agency is flawed. Mark Robson addressed public comments.

Mr. Gil McRae, FWRI, addressed the specific inquiries from the public regarding the scientific data. Chairman Barreto mentioned public input regarding lack of specific research. Mr. McRae stated the comments are incorrect.

Commissioner Barco asked Mr. McRae about the time the fish is in the slot for the proposed slot limit. Mr. McRae replied with the time in the slot limit on each coast.

Vice Chairman Meehan and Mr. McRae discussed snook mortality.

Commissioner Corbett stated the agency's scientific data should be accepted and respected as Florida's population is increasing rapidly. Chairman Barreto stated snook needs to be protected for the future and reiterated that the decision should be strictly based on scientific data.

Commissioner Yablonski asked about the snook bag limit. Ms. McCawley stated in order to keep the season the same, only dropping the bag limit to one fish, will not achieve the 40% SPR unless additional months are closed or the slot is reduced.

Commissioner Barco asked Ms. McCawley to address the current stock assessment. Ms. McCawley replied that the stock is currently at 25-26% SPR statewide. However, modeling predicts a decline in the stock level at about eight years out on the Atlantic coast.

Vice Chairman Meehan mentioned the bass hatchery located in Florida, but the science is not available for a snook hatchery. Mr. McRae stated FWRI is working with Mote Marine to raise snook and there is an arrangement with Harbor Branch to support a hatchery center on the east coast. Commissioner Huffman mentioned the quantity of snook in the State of Florida has drastically decreased over the last 30-40 years.

Under discussion, Chairman Barreto thanked members of the Snook Working Group for their efforts and time devoted to the proposed rules.

Commissioner Barco asked if the 40% SPR was a unanimous decision from the members of the Snook Working Group. Ms. McCawley stated in the end, everyone agreed on the 40% SPR goal.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Meehan, seconded and carried, the Commission approved Rules 68B-21.004, 68B -21.005, 68B-21.006, 68B-21.007 (3), 68B-21.0015, and 68B-21.003 as advertised. Commissioner Barco did not approve staff's recommendation.

Red Drum

Ms. McCawley presented an update on possible rule changes for the red drum fishery based on the questions posed by the Commission at the February 2007 Commission meeting and offered suggestions for rulemaking. Ms. McCawley described the current regulations, the stock assessment results, escapement, examination of 40% escapement, the slot management options, splitting regulations by coast, fish tags for large red drum, data needs for red drum tag, and tarpon tag versus red drum tag. Staff recommended the Commission approve raising the management goal from 30% to 40% escapement by narrowing the slot limit to 21-27 inches and making no changes to any of the other existing regulations for red drum. The alternative recommendation proposed by staff was to narrow the slot to 21-27 inches, a one-fish bag limit and a no closed season on the Atlantic, but close the season in either September or October on the Gulf coast to achieve the 40% escapement rate goal. A draft rule would be presented at the September 2007 Commission meeting.

Public Comment

Ted Forsgren supported 40% escapement, but asked that staff return to the Red Drum Workgroup with other ways to achieve a 40% escapement goal.

Jim Gray stated he participated in the Red Drum Working Group and supports CCA's recommendation. He feels fishery needs to be at 40% escapement.

Bob Gill recommended the Commission defer their decision until the next red drum stock assessment is completed in 2008. If the Commission chooses not to do that, then he suggests modifying staff recommendation to retain the 30% escapement goal, but enact measures to get to 40% escapement. Fishery should be managed for all the people of Florida and 40% is tough to achieve, but could aim for it and possibly build a margin to potentially open the fishery back up to commercial take again.

Commission Discussion

Commissioners discussed a proposed tag system that would allow anglers to keep a fish over the slot limit.

Commissioner Barco discussed her concerns regarding red drum data and the upcoming stock assessment. She questioned why we are proceeding with rulemaking when another stock assessment is due out next year.

Commissioner Barco noted the trends in the Atlantic escapement increasing and the Gulf escapement decreasing. She noted that the ASMFC has a 40% SPR goal for red drum. She questions why Florida and ASMFC cannot have the same goal.

Mr. Gil McRae, FWRI, stated that Florida would need to have much more data on offshore red drum stocks to calculate SPR, which is why we manage for escapement. We currently provide data to ASMFC and they convert it to their SPR estimates.

Commissioner Barco noted the importance of the red drum fishery for Florida, and stated that she sees the management as a north Florida versus south Florida issue.

Ms. McCawley stated that there is one biological red drum stock along the entire Gulf coast and one along the south Atlantic, which gives no biological reason to draw a north-south line across the state.

Commissioner Barco reiterated that she sees no sense of urgency for moving forward with recommendations when an assessment is coming.

Chairman Barreto stated the Commission can either move forward with staff's recommendation or wait and re-evaluate with a full stock assessment in place. Vice Chairman Meehan questioned whether staff thinks the stock will be well below the 40% escapement by the next assessment. Mr. Robson replied that it is hard to predict.

Commissioner Yablonski suggested approving the 40% SPR and hold off on any management decision until after the next stock assessment. Mr. Haddad replied the Commission would have to conduct the due process twice and advised if contemplating deferring rulemaking, defer the escapement issue also.

Commissioner Barco asked if the Commission should address each coast separately, because the Gulf may need more management action than the Atlantic. Mr. Robson stated the base recommendation is to treat both coasts separately. The stock assessment for 2008 will only include data through 2006.

Mr. Robson recommended staff would return at the September 2007 Commission meeting with bi-coastal management options.

Vice Chairman Meehan asked that stakeholders be allowed to see all of the options and Commission Barco asked that staff return with a full suite of options like snook.

Vice Chairman Meehan asked staff to review trophy tags related to fishing tournaments.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Meehan, seconded and carried, the Commission approved raising the management goal from 30% to 40% escapement, move toward the 40% escapement goal, and provide additional options to stakeholders for size and bag limits, look at both coasts separately and statewide and present recommendations to the Commission at the September or December 2007 Commission meeting.

Draft Rules – Trap Debris and Trap Removal

Mr. Sharp presented draft Rules 68B-55.001, Definitions; 68B-55.002, Retrieval of Trap Debris; 68B-55.004, Retrieval of Derelict Traps; and 68B-55.005, Recovery of Traps in Area of Major Natural Disaster. Mr. Sharp stated the draft rule amends elements of the Trap Retrieval and Trap Debris Removal

Rule (68B-55); and described the elements of the rules. Staff recommended the Commission approve the draft rule and proceed to a final public hearing in September. The proposed schedule would allow the new rules, if approved, to take effect in October 2007, prior to the conclusion of the 2007 hurricane season.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Barreto mentioned the challenge of trap retrieval in the Flamingo area and asked what is being done to clean up the traps. Mr. Sharp stated the trap retrieval program for that area is scheduled in July 2007.

Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved draft Rules 68B-55.001, 68b-55.002, 68B-55.004, and 68B-55.005 and present the rules at the September Commission meeting for a final public hearing.

Draft Rules – Fold up Blue Crab Traps

Mr. Sharp presented the draft Rules 68B-45.002, Definitions; and 68B-45.004, Regulation and Prohibition of Certain Harvesting Gear. The purpose of the draft rule is to amend rule language that defines a legal fold up blue crab traps used by recreational fisheries. Staff recommended adopting the draft rule, and if approved proceed to a final public hearing in September 2007.

Commission Discussion

Upon motion of Commissioner Stephenson, seconded and carried, the Commission approved draft Rules 68B-45.002 and 68B-45.004; and directed staff to present the rules for a final public hearing at the September Commission meeting.

Draft Rule – Boating Restricted Areas – Withlacoochee River

Major Paul Ouellette presented draft Rule 68D-24.109, Withlacoochee River Boating Restricted Area. The proposed rule would revise speed and operational regulations for vessels on or adjacent to the Withlacoochee River in Citrus, Hernando, Marion, and Sumter counties during flood conditions. Staff recommended the Commission direct staff to proceed with amending 68D-24.109 during the June Commission meeting.

Commission Discussion

Upon motion of Commissioner Corbett, seconded and carried, the Commission approved draft Rule 68D-24.109; and present to the Commission for a final public hearing at the September Commission meeting.

Spiny Lobster Advisory Board

Mr. Sharp provided an update on the Spiny Lobster Advisory Board's consensus recommendations regarding the FWC's spiny lobster management strategy and discussed the two Board recommendation that mark a significant change from the FWC's previously-established management strategy for the fishery. Staff asked the Commission to approve directing staff to: (1) conduct additional surveys and workshops to gauge public support for the recommendations of the staff and the Advisory Board; and (2) develop draft rules that would implement the Board recommendations and staff recommendations,

including draft rules that would address trap reduction at the September Commission meeting; with the intent of having a final public hearing on the rules at the December Commission meeting in the Keys.

Public Comment

Jerry Sansom (Organized Fishermen's Association) supported staff's recommendation and discussed the issue of undersized lobsters.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chairman Meehan asked Mr. Sharp about the allocation of traps and the status of Casitas. Mr. Sharp stated the Board discussed how to manage allocation and decided not to pursue Casitas.

Commissioner Yablonski discussed the allocation of traps issue and allowing the transferability between the commercial trappers. Mr. Sharp stated the concept was presented to the Board with no support.

Commissioner Yablonski and Chuck Collins discussed a process involving recreational and commercial lobster anglers and retiring the traps.

Chairman Barreto asked Mr. Sharp about establishing a two-day recreational sports season license for Monroe County. Mr. Sharp stated members of the Board recommended to assist with the enforcement of the daily lobster bag limit. Chairman Barreto asked Mr. Sharp to send him detailed information regarding this recommendation.

Upon motion of Commissioner seconded and carried, the Commission approved directing staff to: (1) conduct additional surveys and workshops to gauge public support for the recommendations of the staff and the Advisory Board; and (2) develop draft rules that would implement the Board recommendations and staff recommendations, including draft rules that would address trap reduction for the September Commission meeting; with the intent of having a final public hearing on the rules at the December Commission meeting.

Anchoring and Mooring Issue

Lt. Col. Jim Brown, Deputy Director of the Division of Law Enforcement presented an update on the anchoring and mooring issue; and recommendations received from public workshops. The public concerns included: lack of access, over regulation, inconsistent/confusing statutes and rules, pollution, and aesthetic nuisances. Lt. Col. Brown discussed alternative non-Legislative and Legislative solutions as well as staff recommendations. Staff asked the Commission for approval to direct staff to: (1) expand the scope of this project to include clarification of authorities held by the Commission and local governments in regards to vessel traffic management; and (2) pursue needed legislative authorizations in the 2009 Legislative Session.

Public Comment

Mark Leslie (Boating Advisory Council) stated his concerns regarding vessel registration regulations. He said there is an ongoing problem with derelict/unregistered vessels being anchored and left in the water. He recommended the Commission consider amending the current law regarding registered vessels to make it easier to track down the owners of derelict vessels. The law currently states the vessel has to be registered if it is used in Florida waters. In addition, he asked the Commission to provide a letter to the Governor, Cabinet, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection requesting their involvement with the derelict vessel issue. Chairman Barreto stated he would direct staff to contact the agencies.

Jerry Sansom supported staff's recommendations

Richard Blackford (Seven Seas Cruising Association) provided handouts to the Commissioners and discussed their recommendations regarding vessel storage.

Gary Hanlin expressed his frustrations when applying for and obtaining mooring fields.

Walter Pine stated his concerns regarding the Commission's involvement in solving the derelict vessels issue. He recommended a number of solutions.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Barreto reiterated that staff needs to move forward with this issue.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Meehan, seconded and carried, the Commission approved directing staff to: (1) expand the scope of the anchoring and mooring buoy project to include clarification of authorities held by the Commission and local governments in regards to vessel traffic management; and (2) pursue needed legislative authorizations in the 2009 Legislative Session.

Commissioner Huffman suggested the Commission partner with other agencies. Lt. Col. Brown stated staff is limited to local government rather than pursue collaborating with other agencies; however, his suggestion could be added to future plans.

Federal Issues

Mr. Robson presented an update on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meeting held June 4-8, 2007 in New Orleans. The issues discussed included: red snapper, aquaculture, mackerel, reef fish, vermilion snapper, allowable catch limits, and budget items. Commission staff will continue working with Council members and staff to rebuild stocks for red grouper, gag grouper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish. Staff will also be bringing red snapper issues to the Commission at a future meeting. Additionally, staff will return at the September 2007 Commission meeting with a report on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting.

Public Comment

Bob Gill discussed the need for communication and consistency between the state and federal side.

Bob Zales, II (Panama City Boaters' Association) discussed the red snapper issue related to the provision listed in a document to the Senate regarding the fishing season and a request for a 10% credit to anglers due to the effects of hurricanes and the shrimp bycatch resolution.

Ted Forsgren urged the Commission to reconsider the recreational bag limit and the reduction of shrimp troll bykill.

Commission Discussion

Chairman Barreto asked Mr. Robson to email a list of upcoming Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting dates and locations.

Commissioners' Areas of Emphasis

Due to ending the meeting early, Chairman Barreto asked staff to add the final vision document for the Future of Saltwater Fishing in Florida to the September 2007 Commission meeting agenda due to lack of time remaining. In addition, Chairman Barreto asked Jackie Fauls to email the Commissioners the 2007 Legislative Session report.

Upon motion of Commissioner Yablonski, seconded and carried, the Commissioner approved directing staff to present the final vision document for the Future of Saltwater Fishing in Florida at the September 2007 Commission meeting.

Chairman Barreto introduced Bill Zepernick, Legislative Policy Analyst with the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, and thanked him for his attendance.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

Anthony Mead stated his concerns regarding the selection of user group members; commercial and recreational, and requested another group of members-charter guides be added.

Ron Rincones discussed his concerns regarding the problems with jewfish. Chairman Barreto stated his concerns involve the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and it is not FWC's jurisdiction.

David Grix (Fishing for Freedom) discussed his concerns regarding the current gill net size regulations.

Ted Forsgren provided a map of one of the four alternatives proposed by the Everglades National Park. He urged the Commission to join with the anglers and conservationists to address Alternative D listed in the proposal.

Vice Chairman Meehan asked Chairman Barreto if the Commission has replied to the Everglades National Park with a position. Mr. Robson stated Chuck Collins and staff is reviewing the proposals and will prepare official comment by the date requested by the Everglades National Park. Upon motion of Commissioner Yablonski, seconded and carried, the Commission approved Chairman Barreto to provide a letter on behalf of the Commission with review and approval of the Commissioners and the Executive Director before stating a position.

Walter Pine discussed his concerns regarding the required statements by law to apply for disabled accommodations. He asked for the rules for required written procedure to apply for accommodation of his blue crab endorsement. Chairman Barreto asked staff to follow up with Mr. Pine regarding his request. Jim Antista added that he has received the information he request and will follow up with Mr. Pine.

Robert Snyder stated in written comment that he would like to see a future Commission meeting held in Clewiston.

Mark Leslie requested that vessels anchored or stored should be required have the proper registration and add this to the proposed issues for the 2008 Legislative Session. This is Florida Statute 328. Chairman Barreto asked Col. Jones and Jackie Fauls to work with Mr. Leslie regarding his request.

Commission Exchange

Vice Chairman Meehan welcomed Commissioner Stephenson and commented on the snook fishery issues. He suggested chumming and that is should be an illegal action.

Chairman Barreto stated he is proud with the outcome of the imperiled species management plans addressed and approved on June 13. In addition, he directed staff to update the agency website for ease of use.

Commissioner Huffman thanked Dennis David for his efforts at social the night before.

Commission Administrative Matters

Chairman Barreto called for a motion to approve the proposed 2008 Commission meeting locations and dates.

Upon motion of Commissioner Huffman, seconded and carried, the Commission approved the proposed 2008 Commission meeting dates and locations.

Adjournment

Chairman Barreto adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

Rodney Barreto
Chairman

Kenneth D. Haddad
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

Commission Secretary

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