

# Coral ECA Fisheries Stakeholder

# Committee - Meeting 11 part 1

### Virtual meeting via Zoom

### 6-8 pm, Tuesday March 1st 2022

**Summary – March 1st**

Overview

On Tuesday, March 1st the first part of two of the eleventh Fishery Stakeholder Committee meetings was held virtually via Zoom. Project principal investigator Kai Lorenzen and facilitator Susana Hervas attended the meeting.

Eleven committee members, six members of the public, one Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission staff, and two Florida Department of Environmental Protection employees attended the meeting.

The meeting objectives were to:

* Review emerging recommendations
* Co-develop survey for constituency

Welcome

The start of the meeting was a quick presentation with an explanation and clarification of the meeting agenda and objectives, reminder of group norms – highlighting *listen carefully, consider each idea,* and *tough on the issues, not on the people* - and sunshine law (Slides in Appendix 1.). Committee members were also reminded that they will receive the survey by email for feedback. There will be a short presentation today, and a feedback session on Thursday.

Group Activity

The activity this session was a continuation of where they left off last meeting with regards to discussing the emerging recommendations. Instead of going through every statement separately, several recommendation ideas pertaining to the same topic were presented for their discussion. In this case, the topics were 1) living shorelines, 2) habitat, 3) systems and agency, 4) lobster traps. Committee members were reminded to have a balanced discussion to advance the thinking and consider: can ideas be combined? Can it be more specific? Does the wording need to change? The group discussed in detail. Below are the notes taken during the facilitated session:

**Living shorelines:**

*Use flood plain predictions to determine where we use living shorelines*

*Replace seawalls with living shorelines and add this to the new sea level rise resilience Florida law*

*Mandatory for all new and repaired seawalls and docks to have living wall/reef*

Discussion:

* I like these just the way they are. They are strong, direct and simple.
* Yesterday the US Govt came up with new sea level rise predictions. 10.12 inches for 2050. When look floodplain predictions to determine where to place living shorelines, we need to figure lot of places will need protection from hurricanes, and it is a great opportunity for living shoreline because it can offer protect but also clean water - growing oyster, clams, mangroves. And if you have to replace your sea wall, why wouldn’t you want to have something with grass flat at the front of your house. Would be good to have as part of the law.
* I live way up the river that is navigable. No problem putting a living wall, but not sure what would grow there. I don’t have a problem with it but why make people do it when there is no clear benefit? If this law requires homeowner to do it, it might cause the wall to deteriorate because homeowner cannot afford it.
* Hope we would have government assistance on this. But if seawall is falling down because it doesn’t meet the code, then it is the homeowner´s responsibility. And in many cases, if we look at how we do law, it might be easier to do riprap in front of it. So how would we do it? Where does the funding come from? Can we get private-government working together?
* My only problem is “mandatory” for all new and repaired. Talking about all of Florida. Not every structure and area are the same. And the concept is good, and we can make it affordable for seawall repair, but we will see more deterioration that doesn’t get handled and that´s a problem. Make it popular and doable. Could use grant applications to make it a good product that people can afford.
* Instead of mandatory use some type of incentive; break on the permit fee or grants. More positive sounding.
* Maybe tax break.
* Like incentives for septic to sewer
* Need to get rid of “mandatory”
* Whoever has to repair the wall need to be taught why it´s so important – for the environment and also help stabilize their seawall and give it longevity.
* Replace seawalls with living shorelines as appropriate – because would everglades put living shorelines in front of their docks? Port of Miami won’t put living shorelines against cruise ship walls.
* Mitigation for port of Miami is put in other places. Not appropriate at the port, but they do other mitigation in other places to pay for the damage.
* Some seawalls won’t have a living shorelines, they won’t grow that way.
* Yes, and there are other mitigation forms
* Some places need a seawall, so instead of living shoreline, call it living seawall. Connotation of living shoreline is to tear a seawall to put a shoreline. But you can replace the seawall with things that allow hiding places for marine life. It´s worded weird.
* Maybe expand the wording to cover all those bases.
* Maybe replace seawalls with living shorelines/seawalls. So you sea it´s a living seawall, not that all seawall has to be replaced with a living shoreline.
* These are general recommendations, and we need to keep them practical and general.
* Don´t want to add much, it’s a difficult thing to resolve. The seas continue to rise, so how do you mitigate for that? Multiple solutions can be proposed. Long range predictions for where changes will have the most impact is critical. As Florida grows, it’s something we need to coordinate with our planning.
* Let’s not get too into the weeds on this.

**Habitat**

*Create seagrass mitigation banks*

*Create special management areas to protect seagrass*

*Protect the natural sand* *line in between the reef as it is habitat for shrimp and fish feeding*

Discussion:

* I’m in favor of the mitigation bank, and think we can use mitigation for things other than seagrass too. We may start having more private companies giving up areas for mitigation. For the natural sand line one, it doesn’t say what that means – from a management side? We’ve all agreed to protect habitat. It seems a bit broad.
* A few issues here. For seagrass mitigation banks, there’s something in the law that’s prohibitive about it – need to look it up. For special management areas, the devil is in the details, it could be critically good or critically bad. It sounds like a great thing, but it can be problematic until we fully delve into the details. For natural sand habitat, that touches on artificial reef habitats. When we’re discussing the different strata, reef, hardbottom, sand, if we don’t blend in with artificial reefs then it’s something that could conflict.
* I agree. When I brought this up, I was thinking about the different habitat strata to keep the habitats between the reefs. If we replenish with artificial reefs we need to make sure we keep those sand lines there. In terms of seagrass and estuaries, we’ve lost almost everything except Tampa Bay. We´ve lost our seagrass. When you go to plant it, will it survive with all the runoff and sewage. We’ve had special management areas for years, down in the Keys and the Bay, no motor zones, and we’ve still lost grass. I’d like to look at this again when it comes to seagrass, because if we can’t have a healthy estuarine system then what’s the point of mitigating or creating special management areas.
* There are a couple bills in the legislature about seagrass mitigation banks. We have to be careful with them. Since we’re running out of seagrass, people will start trying to mitigate in the wrong areas and for the wrong things. Be cautious with how seagrass mitigation banks would be set up.
* Yes there are bills working their ways through now. In most mitigation banks, they have a minimum time – like if it dies within a certain time, you’re still obligated to the restoration of it. Needs to be tied to the mitigation.
* One of the ways I’ve seen mitigation banks proposed in projects, they have a pristine piece of property to turn over to public lands. There are ways it can preserve land from being developed. Just another thing to consider.
* If seagrass is dying and it’s covered in algae then we can’t fix the issue, then what’s the point? If it’s not giving us a positive result, then why are we doing it? Need to get from inshore to the reef.
* Maybe this would be a conversation for prioritization.
* We do have very few areas that can be used as seagrass mitigation, but we’ve always been behind the curve, isn’t this getting ahead. If we make headway with seagrass and it starts to come back, then we’re set. But Dan is correct, it’s an interesting dilemma. The legislature usually looks at the cost benefit so it will be a hard sale.
* This may be stupid but, there may be people that don’t know what mitigation banks are, so the wording might be confusing. This makes it seem like everyone reading already knows what this means. Might be difficult for the public meetings. We could always add a footnote at the end.
* The seagrass in my canal grew back pretty quickly, and died when they sprayed again. What grass that we do have left, is getting destroyed by so many more boats anchoring now. When the boat show was at marine stadium and they’re worrying about the seagrass there, the following year the seagrass was 20% more, and even 20% more the next year. I’m not a scientist but it’s cool how grass can grow back so quickly. But there’s an issue with anchoring boats killing seagrass.
* The 2 places in front of the yacht club and Mashta point – those were the best spots historically and now they’re destroyed.
* Does it make sense to establish mitigation sites for outplanting for corals? If we’re having trouble growing seagrass, maybe in the meantime we do mitigation to help coral.
* What happens now is that the corals will be killed by stony coral disease.
* Gary – Not all corals have the same susceptibility. Fully understand not wanting to plant grass where isn’t not going to grow, but thinking we could help out with some corals instead.
* Add coral/seagrass mitigation.
* Speaking to MPAs. If we’re going to plant corals offshore, then we shouldn’t have anyone anchoring there or impacting the area. Back to MPAs, could be small but a lot of them – trying to make sure they have the best chance to survive.
* They already have areas called SPAs, special protective areas. I’m not in favor of restricting access, but I would be in favor of trying to offset some of that.
* But you’d need to restrict access to make sure these survive.
* Worth leaving mitigation banks statement, but we have concerns with how seagrass mitigation banks ae set up.
* Just like water quality issues, this is a big part. Trying to mitigate anchoring with more controlled mooring buoys within the state would be good. Combine using mooring buoy fields with special management zones as needed. It would need a lot of considerations, but good tools.
* There are examples of special management areas to help keep people from anchoring – like pole and troll. Helps people keep them from shallow areas. Maybe do pole and troll and no anchoring.
* That should be creative mitigation.
* There are lots of places within Biscayne Bay that aren’t marked and are super shallow. They run around all the time. They need to mark shallow water areas much better than they are now.
* I agree with Harry. Might want to look at increased fines for grounding. Might want to look at Biscayne National Park. They copied methods from Everglades National Park. They’ve done an outstanding job, and you need to take an online course before you can operate in Everglades. They’re pretty successful there.
* They use PVC pipes to get birds to fertilize flats areas. They could use this fencing to surround critical areas and prevent people from running around. I’m seeing disastrous situation; little white hole gets bigger by each boat when the others follow the first boat. Someone needs to do something to control anchoring in the Bay.
* The poles work until we had the full collapse of the North Bay. We overfertilized and the grass flats ended up dying. It might work if we weren’t so fertilizer rich, we don’t want to add to it.
* If we didn’t put seed water on the top, then it’d be less fertilizer.
* Need reflectors on the pipes, they’re dangerous.
* Maybe Dade county needs to be minimum wake after dark.
* If we’re going to have a section on seagrass, maybe we need full seagrass section – including one about we need to promote environmental policies that will promote the regrowth of seagrass in the Bay and in the flats. But maybe that would help round this out.
* I agree with 99% of comments, we’re good to move on.

**Systems and Agencies**

*SeaGrant to compile all projects from different agencies relating to water quality under one same database*

*Mandatory review of policies among agencies so everyone is interpreting the same way*

*Streamline processes among agencies*

Discussion:

* I just used SeaGrant as an example, I don’t know if it should definitely be them, but someone like them. This can be widened to include other groups.
* Could be a university, grad student, non-profit, etc.
* I like getting different opinions from different areas, it brings more minds together. Don’t want it all with one organization.
* April – I think SeaGrant is a good group to work with, they have access to a lot of other groups. But it doesn’t have to be only SeaGrant. They’ve had good success working with the marine community. Nova could be another option, but SeaGrant has a larger network.
* What did you mean by “streamline processes”? Can we define this a bit more?
* If you’re permitting in Broward, they tell you some rules, then you go to the next level and they want different things. So you go back and forth… The problem is the agencies don’t agree among each other.
* I can live with these.
* Streamline agencies, governments can’t agree with each other. When it comes to the environment or the law, you’re going to have different interpretations of the law. It’s likely to never align.
* Other issue is how long it takes, like to install an artificial reef. Maybe they all sit in a room at once and everyone discusses problems. Let there be a centralized process where everybody tells you what their problem is so they know all at once.
* If we could put everyone together at the same time, it might help with bureaucracy and streamline the process

The problem is we have overlapping jurisdictions. To get a permit you have to go through the process, from A to F instead of A to B. I’ve tried to map out the processes in process maps and it’s extremely difficult. Even if you get it organized, you have different state and county rules. One legislature session change can impact the system. Unless you can separate jurisdictions, if you had one agency doing it, but you can’t. There are too many parties involved, that’s where the problem comes in.

* Seems very knotted together and bureaucratic.
* A lot of things aren’t law of statutes, they’re policies with different agencies. Is there any language we can use to address this?
* It’s like herding cats if you want people to streamline on anything. It’s hard enough within one agency to get collaboration towards a common goal, even harder with multiple.
* Maybe the way is to work with processes. Like having the agencies all together periodically to ensure they have the most efficient processes - every year or two. It will be a mess but at least bring people together. I used to lobby, and the representatives always thought the biggest problem would be medicare/medicaid, but no, it was the army corps of engineers. The elected officials are just as frustrated as we are here.
* Everyone is ok moving on.

**Lobster traps**

*Shift from traditional lobster traps to new trap technologies (Ref. Lobster trap modifications for right whales. Final rule already out)*

*Ban lobster traps in sensitive sites*

Discussion:

* I haven’t seen one commercial lobster person in this group. That will be a big problem. No one shows up until you go to pass a rule about them, and they haven´t been involved and then they show up. I want to see them here. They have issues – putting out long strings, dragging traps across the reefs, etc. These people need to be at the table, they’ll bring lots of lawyers.
* We tried to tackle lobster traps years ago, maybe 2011-2012, because the commercial lobster fishermen are overcapitalized. Because they’re yield went down in the traps they had to put out more traps, a second trap or crew. So they don’t get the same yield per trap. Maybe 700,000 traps in the Keys. When we tried to address them, and tried to lower the number of traps. If they reduced to a couple of hundred thousands, their yields would increase. But people who supplied wood for the traps, and other suppliers were also involved. I proposed to let the market regulate it. There was a pushback against casitas. I proposed, let´s make casitas legal. We take them where to put them and specifications. And if someone wanted to put casita out then they would have to buy trap tags. That way the market takes the traps out of the fishery. Because casitas are only fished twice a year in a certain habitat and depth. Yield tremendously and create habitat for fish. This way traps would come out of the system. Older people would want to sell but younger people wont want to buy them because yields are so less. So can buy the fishery out. As law enforcement, it is possible to do so. Unfortunately, too many agencies were involved. FLNMS, DEP, FWC, etc. Bureaucracy prohibits us from coming up with creative solutions that could work.
* Same situation as N-134, having felt excluded from the process and finding out last minute.
* As much as I am pro-environment, I am very con when we start to use words like ban and legislate where we can go. It is a slippery slope. Once you start regulating a group, then you follow suit with another group. We have to be careful because MPAs were sensitive, now we are talking about banning lobster traps and regulating them. I am not too keen on the thought. But sensitive to word ban. I cannot get behind even if it is for lobster fishermen.
* Delete the longlines and go back to single individual lines.
* Commercial guys have 100 lined traps per commercial license for stone crabs. Also drag ropes through inshore structure for stone crabbing.
* What are new trap technologies? If we have too many traps and adding more is not solving the problem, maybe FWC should say how many traps there should be per license. Then it would make sense because traps would yield more.
* In 1989 2.4M traps in Florida. We cut it down 200,000 per year. They fought that, but we said your return will double with trap reduction. If now it as we just heard, it is 700,000 traps, we could reduce even more and probably increase the catch, and market with China makes it more valuable.
* We should come up with 3 or 4 points showing benefits of proposed lobster recommendations for public meeting.
* In 1976 they said if eliminate 90% of the traps, they would still catch all the adult lobsters. There are more traps than necessary.
* Regarding casitas, FWC has a lot of people in favor of them, FWC commission-wise. They might be favorable to doing that.
* Question about casitas. What keeps me from going to the casitas and catching lobsters?
* Same thing as if someone robs a trap, you’ll get arrested. We’d have license numbers on them.
* Can change trap lines and maybe reducing the length. Issue a tag just as you do for a lobster trap. We need the people who fish lobster and stone crabs to weigh in.
* Issue will always be with law enforcement. We can tag the casitas and have cameras. Enforcement can be done. We need to work with them to create a law, but nothing will be foolproof.

No comments from the public

Introducing the Survey Draft

Dr. Kai Lorenzen introduced the survey to set the scene for Thursday’s activity. The survey draft will be sent via email to the committee members to look at before Thursday’s meeting.

The purpose of the survey is to gain information from a representative sample of fishing stakeholders in the Coral ECA about their:

1. Fishing activities
2. Perception of the state of the coral reef ecosystem and of quality of fishing
3. Perception of the factors influencing the coral reef ecosystem and of quality of fishing
4. Support for a range of different management ideas
5. Perception of the importance of different, broad categories of management measures to improving conservation of the coral reef ecosystem and quality of fishing

The survey will help inform the committee and FDEP about perceptions and preferences in the wider fishing community (it’s a study to inform the committee discussions, not a ‘vote’ on recommendations).

The survey will be sent to a representative sample of recreational reef fish permit holders, charter captains, and commercial fishermen. The survey will also be made available to others via email lists, a link on the project webpage, etc.

We are looking for broad feedback on the survey draft and in particular, the set of management ideas for which we are asking for feedback (Q. 11). We will then update the draft and pre-test the survey on a small number of respondents before making it available more widely.

Comments:

* This is a great summary that you’ve put together based on our input. My only suggestion would be if we could look at this before the comments are done. Like adding additional ideas if they come along, and we could redesign based on the info as needed. When we see what you’re looking to accomplish, we can provide more input to help.
* The acronyms aren’t the best, like ECA, it may confuse people.

Wrap up and Adjourn

Appendix 1

A picture containing text

Description automatically generated

Diagram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Graphical user interface, calendar

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Graphical user interface

Description automatically generated

Chart, sunburst chart

Description automatically generated

A picture containing text, businesscard

Description automatically generated

Diagram

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

A picture containing text, gear, metalware, wheel

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

Text

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

A picture containing text, boat, outdoor

Description automatically generated