

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
Recreational - Charter Fishing Working Group Meeting
January 25, 2017

Working Group Meeting Summary

Meeting Agenda

1. Working Group Introduction, Review of Agenda and Charge from SAC
2. Members Interests and Objectives for Participation
3. Overview of Blue Star program
4. Drafting the Mission Statement and Goals of Blue Angler
5. Introduction to Identifying Best Practices for Blue Angler
6. Public Comment

Major Points of Discussion:

1. The working group reviewed the resolution passed by the Sanctuary Advisory Council in August 2016, which detailed the charge of the working group. It was noted that this program and enhancing relationships with recreational anglers in general is a priority for the national level headquarters office.

2. The working group members individually shared their interests and objectives for participation in the group. Many shared similar viewpoints including:

- Charter boat captains can be ambassadors for the Florida Keys environment
 - Share proper fishing behaviors
 - Create an educational experience for their clients that goes beyond fishing to help foster the emotional connection
 - Create a uniform fishing ethic/formalized code of conduct
- Promote stewardship and conservation of our ecosystem, appreciating the resources we have in the FL Keys
- Teach good practices to the next generation
- Strengthen the relationship between anglers and agencies
 - Open lines of communication, partnership

3. Blue Star Recognition Program

Eric Raslich, FKNMS Education and Outreach Specialist, gave a presentation detailing the Blue Star recognition program for responsible dive and snorkel operators. The framework developed for Blue Star may serve as a suitable model on which to build the Blue Angler framework. The presentation can be found here: <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/blueAngler/blueAngler.html>

Working Group Discussion:

- Questions were raised about specific aspects of Blue Star, including the motivations for dive shops to participate
 - The program is voluntary and there is no cost to dive shop for participation, FKNMS provides all materials
 - Blue Star operators are promoted through FKNMS website, social media, outreach events, & partners

- Blue Star allows dive shop to promote business as “eco-tourism”
- Creates a conservation standard across industry
- Aspects of Blue Star that could translate to Blue Angler:
 - Handouts, educational materials, binders, etc
 - Pre-trip briefing
 - Promotion through website, events, outreach
 - Logo, stickers, other recognition materials
 - Voluntary, no cost program
- Aspects of Blue Star that may not translate to Blue Angler :
 - Annual ride-along may be difficult, especially for small vessels
 - Requirement for annual conservation activity (i.e. beach cleanup)

4. The working group went over the draft mission and goal statement presented to the FKNMS Advisory Council, found here:

<http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20160816blueangler.pdf>. Discussion included:

- “recognition” could be changed to “endorsement” to strengthen the relationship between FKNMS and participating Blue Anglers,
- “customers” should be changed to “clients.”

There was a general consensus regarding the draft mission and goal statement, noting that final discussion would occur following input at public evening meetings.

5. The working group discussed the definition of a ‘best practice’ which was agreed to indicate the methods, tools, and techniques to cause the least amount of impact on any resource. A brainstorm about broad topics to potentially include in Blue Angler as best practices included:

- On the water etiquette
 - Responsible boating
- Interaction with other boaters/anglers
- Interaction with the environment
- Interaction with clients
- Catch and Release / Fish Handling
- Techniques, Tackle, Gear
- Continuing Education: rules, regulations, science
- Reporting illegal actions
- Proper disposal of trash, fish waste

Following this discussion, a suggestion was made to keep practices distinct for inshore versus offshore. If these practices could be displayed in a dynamic way on a website, Blue Anglers could link to from website or have a logo in email signature.

The working group discussed incentives to participate in Blue Angler. Ideas included:

- Promoting the program which leads to increased business
- Obtaining free educational materials for clients
- Networking with other anglers, agencies, advisory council
- Increased investment with the resource
- Increased marketing through articles, radio shows, outreach, website promotion, spotlight features, facebook, etc
- Discounts at retailers, other businesses

6. Public Comment

One individual made public comment:

Ben Daughtry, Commercial Fishing – Marine/Tropical SAC member

"I care about our ecosystem; I care about the Florida Keys. Thank you guys for being here and taking the time, I know how much time this can take. Education and law enforcement are the biggest problems brought to SAC along with water quality. This is the education, this is what this is about, the people, and a lot of what I'm going to hit on is what you all hit on earlier. There are a lot of great ideas, and grassroots is so important. Coming from bottom versus from top. Blue Star charter captains, you guys that are in this room and anybody that you can bring in the first session of it, you guys are basically pioneers. The value is going to be what Brice said, what you get out of it. That is why you are here in this room and it is making a difference. Getting people educated right at that beginning onset, educating their kids down the road, which is so important. I think that Will, you're right to think about this might rise up in the beginning then start to fade, it's going to be a slow building process. You might set the bar really high, you don't want 700 participating in the beginning. If 700 people participate, the bar is too low. You want the best of the best to participate. It's great that you're looking at incentives, but you want to make sure that that's not the reason you're getting into it in the first place. It needs to be inherent. I do think that working with the TDC is a good thing. I sit on the DAC and I think there's a real opportunity to tie that in. You guys talked about creating a blue star type website where you can link with the FWC website and the rules and all that, I think that's great. You're going for low hanging fruit right now, going for the charter boat captains, at some point there certainly could be a recreational component, which would be a great goal because so many people are not going through the charter. It's the weekend warriors from south Florida that come down and do a lot of damage. Having a situation where you get your license and ask "hey are you going to be in the Florida keys" and you can take voluntary education and then get your license and maybe a little more education out of it and maybe you get a sticker or a hat. Get to those people when they are on the site getting their license. We need to make sure that Blue angler, blue star angler, blue star captains, don't get confused. We need two separate names for two separate programs to make sure they're differentiated. Recreational and charter, make sure they're clearly defined. Charter captains will need to meet things that the anglers may not. There are similarities but it won't be the same. I heard back and forth about an annual test or re-up that captains have to do. My personal opinion is that it would be a really benefit to the program if you did have that. Regulations change every year. Also, we need to maintain the website for the program. You don't want 100 people on a list the first year but 20 are not active. Need to make sure they are still interested, active, and engaged. Last thing for me is obviously I have a lot of charter boat friends down here and you know our meeting is February 1st and I will try to get a lot of them in here for that. Thank you for your efforts."

Action Items and Next Steps

1. Working Group members will participate in at least one evening public meeting session.
2. Homework: review list of best management practices and come to the final workshop prepared to discuss those you feel should be included in a Blue Angler program.