

FWC Overview – Focus on Marine Fisheries Management



Presentation to the FKNMS Sanctuary Advisory Council
February 20, 2018



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Outline

1. Introduction to FWC and the Division of Marine Fisheries Management
2. Overview of state rule-making process
3. Discussion of FWC's role in federal fisheries management
4. Topics of interest
 - Current marine fisheries issues
 - Opportunities for public engagement



Photo courtesy Aiden Herzog

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FWC – Who We Are and What We Do

Mission: Manage fish and wildlife populations for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people

State agency with responsibility to:

- Conserve Florida's fish and wildlife resources
- Provide for public safety
- Seek to understand people's points of view and how the impacts of our decisions and activities affect them
- Work to positively influence conservation outcomes
- Use the best available biological, ecological and sociological information to inform our planning and decision-making



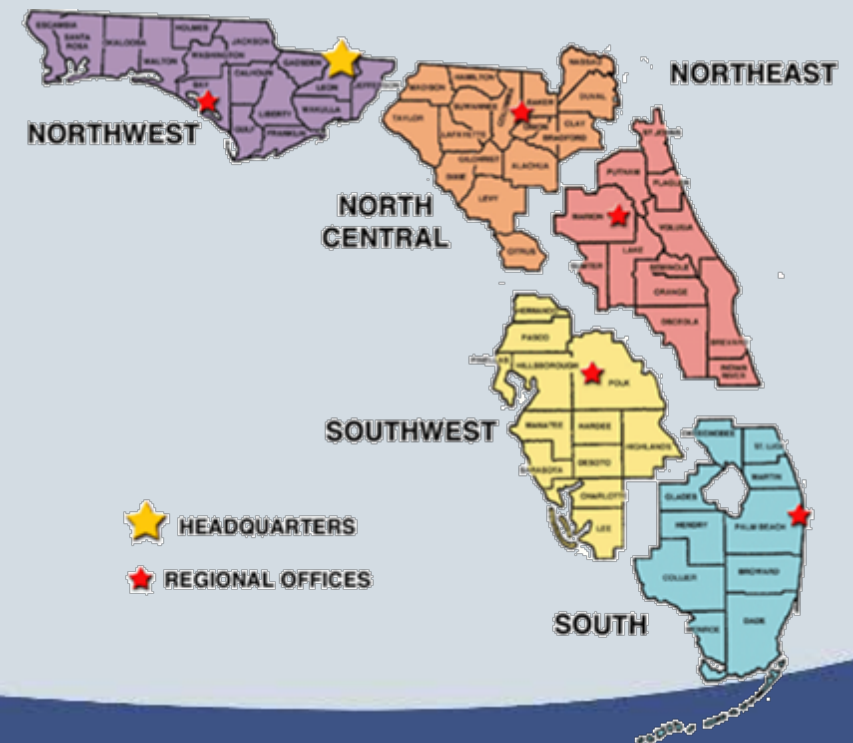
FWC Authority

- FWC has the constitutional authority to exercise the executive and regulatory powers of the state with respect to wild animal life, freshwater aquatic life, and marine fish
- FWC exercises responsibilities delegated by statute
- FWC's constitutional authority to regulate and manage fish and wildlife is unique and exclusive



FWC Quick Facts

- Largest state fish and wildlife agency in the United States
- Largest state fish and wildlife law enforcement
- 7 Commissioners appointed by Governor for 5-year terms
- Over 2,000 full-time employees
- Annual budget of \$378.7 million
- 6 Divisions and 11 Offices
- Headquarters in Tallahassee, 5 regional offices, Fish and Wildlife Resource Institute in St. Petersburg and 76 field offices/labs



FWC Division of Marine Fisheries Management

To sustain the long-term health and abundance of Florida's marine fisheries

- Manages more than 500 native marine species
- 34 full-time employees in 3 sections

Analysis and Rulemaking

- Management (including rule development) for state-managed fisheries

Federal Fisheries

- State rule development for federally managed species
- Coordinates with NOAA Fisheries and serves on federal fishery management councils
- Monitors federal legislation

Fisheries Services

- Outreach and education
- Lionfish education, control and removal
- Artificial reefs
- Trap retrieval
- Comments on marine environmental impacts
- Wholesale dealer auditing



State Waters

- Atlantic Coast: shoreline out to 3 miles off-shore
- Gulf Coast: shoreline out to 9 miles off-shore
- FWC manages some species in both state and federal waters when there is no federal management plan in place



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FWC Rulemaking Process Overview

- Identify issues
- Collect and review scientific data
- Gather public input
- Resolve issues



Identifying Issues

- Ways that DMFM learns of marine fisheries issues
 - Stakeholders (recreational, commercial, or non-consumptive)
 - Scientists with the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI)
 - Law Enforcement Officers
 - Federal or interstate issues
- Examples of issues
 - Regulation loophole allowing fishers to over-exploit a fishery
 - Biological problem in a fishery
 - Mismatch between management approach and stakeholder values
- After an issue is identified, it is discussed at the annual workplan meeting and given a priority (high, medium, low) for the next year's list of issues to work on



Scientific Data

Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) collects data

- St. Petersburg lab and field labs
- Conduct research and monitoring
- MRFSS/MRIP/GRFS
- Assess status and health of fisheries
- Conduct stock assessments



Division of Marine Fisheries Management (DMFM)

- Uses the data collected by FWRI and other entities to guide management recommendations



Collecting Public Input on Issues

- DMFM reviews scientific data and public input
- Staff may gather public input on a fishery prior to formulating a management proposal or after a proposal is made to gather feedback on the proposal
- Input is gathered through a variety of methods
 - Public workshops
 - Video/phone workshops
 - Saltwater Comments web page
 - Relationships with stakeholder groups and representatives
 - Research and management partners, including local, state, and federal governments
 - Stakeholders may call, email, and send letters



Resolving Marine Fisheries Issues

- FWC Commissioners make the final decisions on FWC regulatory issues
- DMFM staff presents the issues to the Commissioners
 - Review and discussion
 - Draft rule
 - Final public hearing
 - Federal consistency
- If new regulations are approved, they may become effective within a few months of final decision
- Some issues are resolved with a non-rulemaking path
 - May or may not involve Commission direction/action



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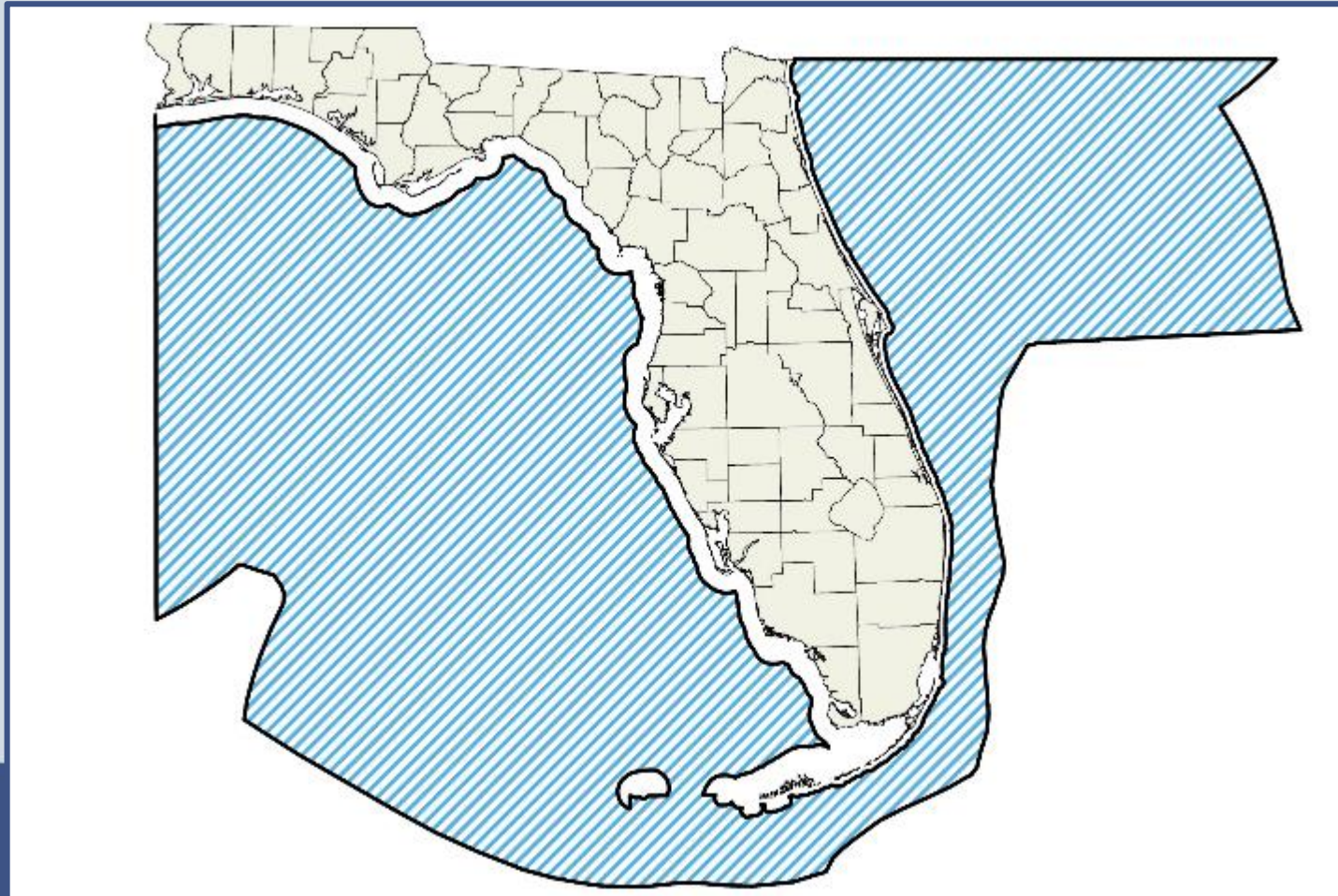
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Federal Waters

- Federal waters extend from the boundary of state waters to 200 nautical miles offshore



Federal Fisheries Management

- Regional Councils
 - South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
 - Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
- NOAA Fisheries Service
 - Southeast Region Office (St. Petersburg, FL)
 - Highly Migratory Species Division

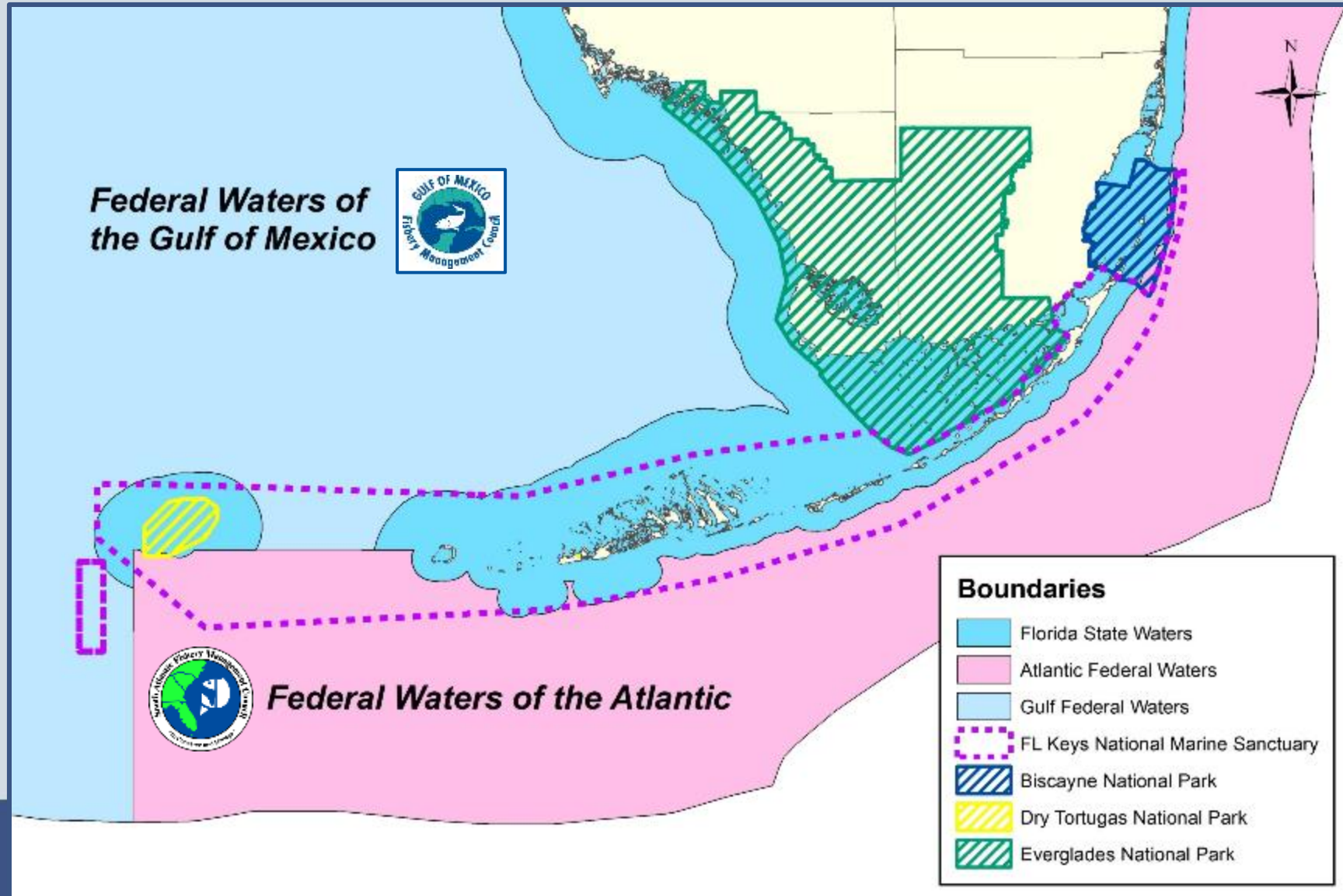


State and Federal Coordination

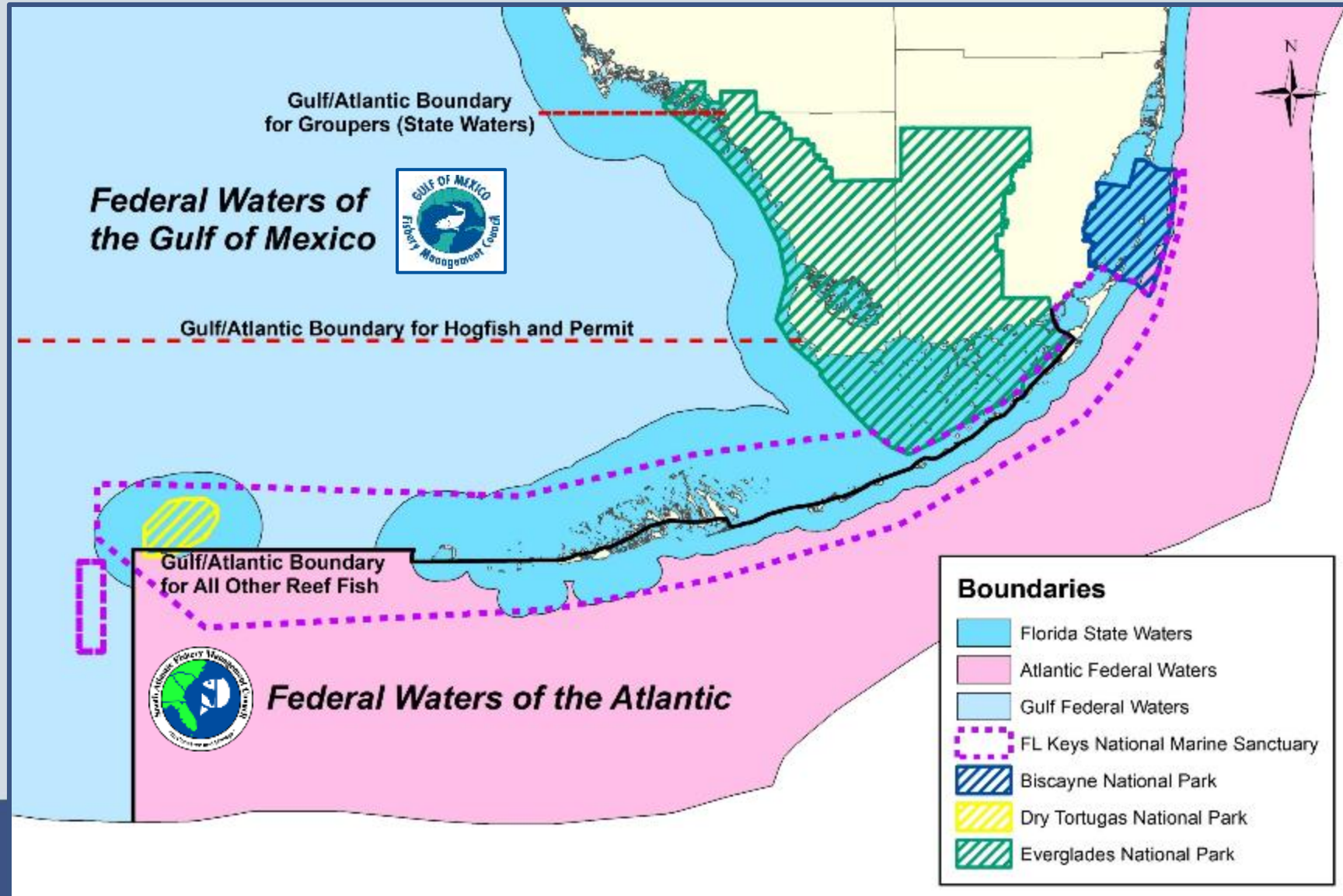
- Florida coordinates with federal partners
 - FWC staff serve as voting members on the regional councils
- Consistent regulations for fisheries that occur in both state and federal waters are often desirable and considered by FWC
 - Easier to enforce
 - Less confusing for anglers
 - Helps achieve common management goals
- Examples: spiny lobster, mutton snapper, hogfish



Multiple Management Authorities in South Florida



Multiple Management Authorities in South Florida



Joint South Florida Management

- Pursued by FWC and the Gulf and South Atlantic councils from 2011 to 2015
- Goal was to address confusion and complication with the multiple jurisdictional boundaries and regulations in the Florida Keys
- Considered delegating some federal management of south Florida species to FWC
 - Recreational bag limits
 - Size limits
 - Fishing seasons
- Progress halted when Councils decided to continue coordinating management of south Florida species through the traditional Council process



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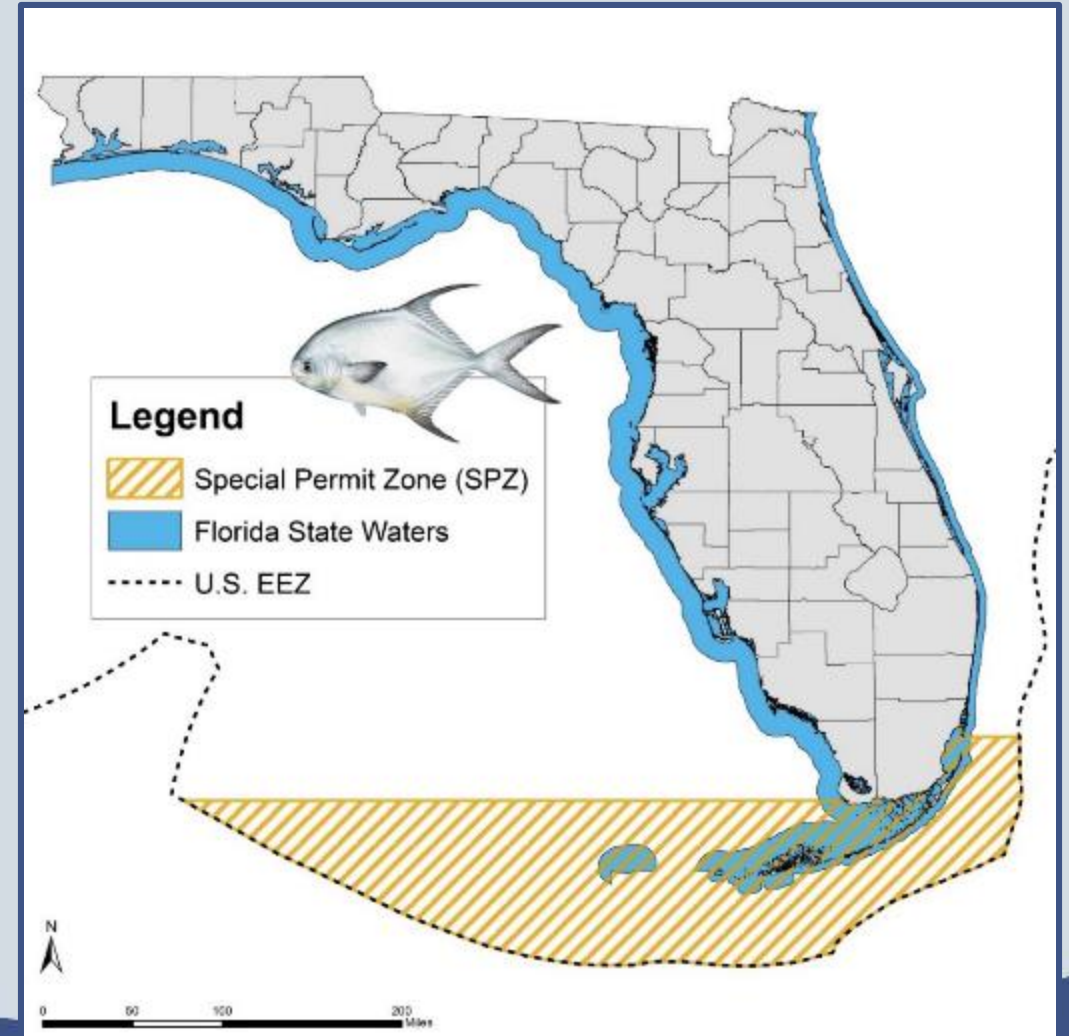
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Recent Rulemaking: Special Permit Zone (SPZ)

- Permit managed regionally based on differences in the resource and fishery practices
 - SPZ: permit managed as a trophy/catch-and-release fishery
- SPZ includes state and federal waters south of Cape Florida on the Atlantic coast and Cape Sable on the Gulf coast
- Unique regulations for permit inside the SPZ
 - More restrictive bag limit
 - Different size limit
 - Spawning season closure
- Effective April 2018: added April to the existing May – July spawning season closure



Recent Rulemaking: Mutton Snapper



- One stock off Florida
 - Most recreational harvest occurs in state waters
- Spawning aggregations occur during spring/summer in Florida Keys
 - Riley's Hump: within Tortugas South Ecological Reserve, closed to harvest
 - Western Dry Rocks: within FKNMS boundary, open to harvest
- 2015 stock assessment showed population is healthy but smaller than previous estimates
 - FWC and Councils changed regulations to keep harvest under federal quotas and provide additional protections for spawning fish
 - Increase minimum size limit to 18 inches
 - Reduce recreational bag limit to 5 fish within 10-snapper aggregate
 - Reduce spawning season trip limit to 5 and set an Atlantic commercial bag limit during the rest of the year of 500 lbs



*Effective in state waters in 2017,
Atlantic federal waters in 2018, and Gulf federal waters expected in 2018*

Recent Rulemaking: Hogfish



- 2014 genetic study identified 3 stocks of hogfish in southeastern U.S.
- 2014 stock assessment found Keys/East Florida stock is currently overfished and undergoing overfishing, and likely overfished since 1980s
- Federal law requires Councils to immediately address overfishing and rebuild the stock within 10 years
 - Major harvest restrictions needed to meet these requirements
 - New federal quotas are >72% below recent harvest levels
 - FWC consistency is necessary because most harvest occurs in state waters
- New and updated regulations:
 - 16-inch minimum size limit
 - 1-fish recreational bag limit
 - May – Oct. recreational season (*new*)
 - 25-lbs. commercial trip limit (*new*)



Effective Aug. 2017 for Keys/East Florida stock



Photo courtesy Michael Sipos

Current Issue: Yellowtail Snapper



- One stock in southeastern U.S. and 99.9% of harvest occurs off Florida
- Management of federal quota is split between the Gulf (25%) and South Atlantic (75%) councils
- Issue: Atlantic commercial quota is being met and fishery is closing early
 - Atlantic recreational and both Gulf fisheries are not catching all of their quotas
- Management response
 - Moved fishing year start date to Aug. 1 so fishery would remain open in winter months when demand and price are higher
 - Still considering other solutions
 - Combine quotas: Atlantic recreational and commercial or Gulf and Atlantic
 - Reallocate quota from recreational to commercial sector
 - Set commercial trip limits to slow harvest



Fishing year start date change effective in 2016



Current Issue: Goliath Grouper

- Recent stock assessment (2016) indicated increased abundance in South Florida but not throughout the original range
 - Rejected for use in federal management
- In 2017, the Commission directed staff to gather public input on the possibility of a limited harvest in state waters for goliath
 - 16 in-person workshops with survey
 - Online “virtual workshop” with survey
 - Comments submitted online, by mail, and by phone
- Staff will be bringing discussion of stakeholder input to the April 25-26 Commission meeting



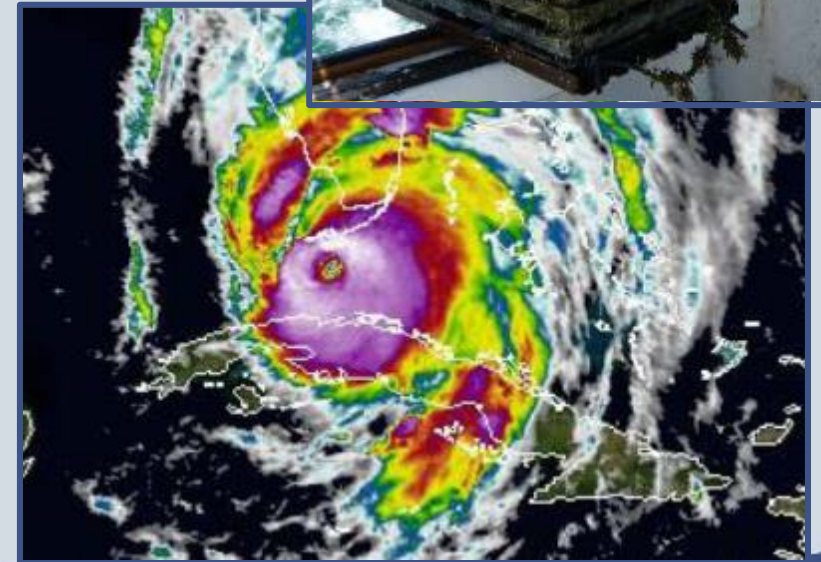
Other Upcoming Topics

Spiny lobster

- Staff working on management of trap fisheries
- Commission recently approved waiver of commercial trap tag fees for 2018-19 season to alleviate economic impacts from trap losses due to Hurricane Irma

Trap retrieval efforts

- Cooperative trap recovery efforts continue
- DMFM received a \$132,892 grant to facilitate additional trap recovery efforts



Thank You!

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Saltwater Public Comments Page

MyFWC.com/SaltwaterComments

