Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Blue Crab Advisory Board Organizational Meeting

September 23 & 24, 2003
Kissimmee, Florida

Meeting Summary Report

Background

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has invited 15 representatives of the hard crab fishery, peeler fishery, and wholesale dealers to serve as members of an ad hoc Blue Crab Advisory Board. The advisory board is designed to bring together a group of industry representatives from around the state who represent a diversity of commercial blue crab stakeholders and who can provide constructive comments and guidance to FWC on the development of the blue crab management program. Over the next five months the advisory board will meet four times in one or two day meetings to focus on reviewing and discussing blue crab fishery issues and the development of a state effort management program for the commercial blue crab fishery. The first meeting was held in Kissimmee, Florida on September 23-24, 2003.

September 23rd – Day One

Welcome and Introductions

Bob Palmer, Bureau Chief, welcomed members to the organizational meeting and stressed the value of the members participation and input into the development of a state management program for the blue crab fishery. Facilitators Hal Beardall and Jeff Blair from the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium reviewed the meeting objectives and agenda, the meeting guidelines, and the consensus-building guidelines (meeting agenda packet available through http://consensus.fsu.edu/ or upon request). Members (see list in appendix A) were then asked to introduce themselves and briefly offer an expectation or desired outcome for the blue crab industry from the meeting process. Facilitators recorded the members’ expectations on flip charts as follows:

• Industry becomes more profitable
• More law enforcement
• Board gains the buy-in of the rest of the industry
• Sustainable blue crab fishery
• Put fee on permit/ license
• License fees
• Address environmental issues like manatee zones; e.g., variances to allow us to make better time through restricted zones
• Better wholesale buyers-market
• Apprenticeship on how to handle blue crabs before entering the industry
• Better rounded industry - better market
• Different laws on in-shore and off-shore crabbing
• Law enforcement
• Good relationships among the members – and special license for soft shell

Blue Crab Fishery Presentation

Bill Teehan, Fisheries Management Analyst, walked members through a power point presentation to provide background on the blue crab fishery in Florida. He covered the life cycle of the blue crab, reported landings by coast and region, summaries of programs in other states, and a brief description of the issues raised during the Sea Grant workshops held last fall. (The power point presentation is available through http://consensus.fsu.edu/ or upon request)

Pre-Meeting Member Survey of Issues

Prior to the meeting the facilitators asked members to complete and return a brief survey of the opportunities, the challenges and key trends affecting the blue crab fishery in Florida. The responses were compiled and presented to the members by the facilitators for group review and discussion during the meeting. (See page 8 in the Agenda Packet available through http://consensus.fsu.edu/ or upon request) Members offered the following additional comments:

Tailwinds or Opportunities
• Florida has a long coastline; we may not have to be as drastic in Florida as in other states
• Coming out of three year drought - catch is improving

Headwinds or Challenges
• Impact species such as dolphins
• Recreational crabbing
• Competition for space (crab buoys, recreational boats, etc.) all vying for the same area
• Manatee zones push everyone out into the channel
• Shark fishing regulations create more sharks
• Sea turtles, fresh water turtles
• Trip ticket system; it needs to be revised
• Lack of proper training, need an apprenticeship program

Trends
• Recreational boaters are ignorant of the penalties for robbing traps
• Court enforcement issues; weak judicial system failing to enforce
• Net ban led to increase in red (predatory) fish
• Theft of crab pots
Developing a Shared Vision of Success

The facilitators guided members through a series of exercises aimed at developing a shared vision among the board members of success in Florida’s blue crab fishery. The facilitators stressed that a shared vision can establish the common ground upon which to build a management plan for the future. The board was asked to start by answering the question, “what is a potential but undesirable future for Florida’s blue crab fishery?” The members offered the following responses:

Undesirable Outcomes
Flood of new crabbers into the industry
Limited/constrained areas for crabbing
Unviable industry - can't make a living
Cheap imports eliminate pick crab market, left with live market only
Restructuring of recreational fishing
Environment degradation continues including dredging without consideration of consequences
Over fished or depleted fisheries
Closing season during high regional production
Developing a management plan that doesn't account for regional issues and seasons
Depleted resources due to pollution from sources such as phosphate mining, fertilizer, and population increases
Discharge of treated sewage without consideration of impacts - storm water discharge too
Lack of public support and value for commercial fishing, including crabbing

Small Group Discussions

Following a break, members were divided into two small groups and asked to consider if everything went right, what would Florida’s blue crab fishery and programs look like in 2012. Each group was assigned one of two alternative questions to generate responsive statements. Below are the questions for each respective group and the statements recorded by the facilitators.

Group 1: What should the FWC and blue crab fishery community be doing in 2012 that is different from what it is doing today?

- Enforcing current laws with penalties - judicial system
- Make 1st degree felony for theft
- FWC - do what Board recommends
- Strong, well-funded state-wide marketing campaign (re: eating and consuming)
- Work with DACS, in plan
- Weekend information for theft - selling to public
- Demand for product increased
• Dedicated funding source to help blue-crab community; fees from licenses, vendor fee or tax
• Sell V-number when retire
• FWC-involved in water pollution (monitor)
• Fair/consistent enforcement of environmental regulations
• Industry effectively influencing water/environmental regulatory agencies
• Regulate blue crab industry for sustainable fishery
• Limit number of boat licenses
• Ensure good science research back, management policy decisions
• Dedicated funding to support research (from license fees)
• Deputize crabbers-enforce regulations
• Recreational crab license with proper trap marketing (track level) with trap number limits- using same standards per commercial
• Allow commercials to put traps at night
• Improved communication between FWC and the industry
• Improved commercial fisheries reputation with the public
• Process to educate public to industry-value, reputation, respect
• Crab-pot watch program (ie. crime watch, beach watch, etc.)
• More crab eaters-develop a recipe that genders interest in eating crab-train chefs to cook
• Restaurants think crabs take too long to eat and limits customer turn-over - create recipes/uses to solve
• Good data/trends on imported crab and its effect
• Develop technology to market crab from polluted areas
• Incidental catch license for shrimpers (required)
• Local fresh crab meat would be perceived as more valuable and healthier than imports
• Locals would get a fair share of increased market
• Tariff on imported crabs allows locals to compete
• Use work with check off programs for marketing including importants
• Incentives for more buyers (pickers)
• Cost of living exceeds increased price for crabs
• Out-of-state shippers need to be regulated for selling in Florida and cutting into market price
• Fishing coops
• Reduce capital investment to get into processing business
• Magazine with names and information for all crabbers-give to retail shops
• Look at red bass situation relative to affects on industry
• Look at sport fishing impacts on crab recruitment relative to eating of crabs
• Better traps with biodegradable buoys to keep fish out
• Stop legislation based on social (not environmental) issues (boats navigating around traps)
• Good cooperation between all users groups to share resources
• Covert trapping practices to create positive reputations
• Limit number of recreational licenses to ensure fair allocation of resources
Group 2: It’s 2012 and you have been asked to write a guest newspaper column on the stellar accomplishments of Florida’s blue crab fisher program over the last 10 years. What Would be the headline? What would you say?

- Blue Crab Industry Strong in Florida
- Florida Established A Model Marketing Program (creative thinking)
- Improved Water Quality (program reduces nitrates, fertilizes and storm water runoff impacts)
- Tariffs on Imported Crab Products Leads to Stronger Florida Industry
- Nothing Changes and Industry Remains Strong
- New Education Program Develops Responsible Harvester Who Knows Environment
- Blue Cab Rivals Maine Lobster in Tourism for Florida
- Positive Media Campaign by the State Educates the Public on the Value of Commercial Fishing
- Recruitment Efforts Lead to a New Generation of Crabbers (hands on experience invaluable)
- Public Attitude Positive About Blue Crabbers
- Positive Image of Crabbers Results From State Effort
- Program to Educate Public Saves Crabbers Money (program teaches navigation and limits damages to traps)
- Limited Entry Program with Transferable Licenses (promotes education of new generation)
- Limits on Vessel Endorsements
- More Manatees Results In Smaller Zones and More Variances

Key Themes for the Future

Members reconvened in a full group and the facilitators offered brief summary reports of the small group discussions. Members were then asked to review the statements from both small groups and identify the themes they thought characterized the desired future for Florida’s blue crab fishery. They offered the following themes:

- Licensing/fees/funding
- Marketing
- User conflicts
- Education – including public, economic, import impacts, communication
- Law enforcement (theft issues)
- Regulation ?/ management
- Science/ Data
- Imports
- Communication within industry

After the facilitators summarized the activities and discussion from the first day and reviewed the agenda for day two the meeting was recessed until the next morning.
September 24th – Day Two

Revised Themes

Following a review of the agenda for day two, the facilitators offered the members a revised set of themes for their discussion and approval. After some clarifying discussion, members unanimously accepted the following themes for purposes of developing draft goal statements:

- Regulation/Management
  - Law enforcement
  - Science/Data
  - Technology
- Licensing/Fees/Funding
- Education
  - Public
  - Economic/Marketing
  - Import impacts
  - Communication
  - Funding
  - Apprenticeship
- Environmental Impacts
- User Conflicts

Developing Goal Statements

Working in a plenary group, facilitators led the board through development and discussion of draft goal statements for each strategic theme. Facilitators stressed that the goals should be expressed in fairly broad language and that members would have an opportunity to further refine the statements at the next meeting. The board members developed and agreed to the following draft goal statements (the letters are intended only for identification purposes and do not indicate any ranking or prioritization):

Goal A: Regulation/Management
Promote and support a healthy and profitable blue crab industry through management and regulation

Goal B: Licensing and Fees
Develop a licensing system that promotes a healthy and profitable BCI

Goal C: Education
Educate the public consumers and the industry to enhance the perception of and support for the BCI

Goal D: Environmental Impacts
Industry effectively influences water and regulatory agencies to promote a healthy BCI
Industry promotes practices that result in good stewardship

**Goal E: User Conflicts**
Industry will lead efforts to resolve user conflict

**Developing Key Objectives**

Members were next asked to identify possible key objectives or operational issues to be addressed in each goal area. Facilitators described objectives as specific outcomes expressed in concrete terms that help to accomplish the goal. Members were encouraged to offer as many ideas as possible without debating the merits of each idea. Only questions for purposes of clarification were discussed. For each goal area, members offered the following possible objectives:

**Possible Objectives for Goal A: Regulation/ Management**

- Limited entry/effort management
  - Develop a range of alternatives
  - Who can/can't crab
  - How you get certificates or license
- Extending moratorium
- Trap tags
- Trap limits
- Trap reductions
- Sport reductions- limit recreational crabbers
- Trip tickets
- Limit participants/harvesters
- Separate licenses/regulations, for soft and hard shell crabs
- Licensing boats- limits/license vessel endorsement
- Peeler trap locations- evaluate
- Allowing others to use license
- Moratorium loop holes- evaluate
- Theft management
- Science/date
- Trip tickets- for crabs only
- Stock assessment data streams - independent monitoring for adults
- Get information /data from users
- Need biological data
- Use of a log
- Non-recorded sales
- Regional/concerns/issues- regulations
- Location of research and application of pots
- Work with crabbers for research in all 5 regions working relationship
- Use fee money for research
- Working relationship research and industry- communication
- Research on technology related to industry
• Regulations for crab processors
• Look at effects of regulations on profitability for fishery industries same for processor
• Law enforcement and FWC industry communication on laws rule development changes and updates - send copies of the regulations with each license renewal
• Consistent interpretation and enforcement of regulation
• Evaluate clarity and effectiveness of current regulation

Possible Objectives for Goal B: Licensing and Fees
• Direct portion of fees to education, marketing, etc
• Increase fees to new entries into industry
• Increase fees to "part timers"
• Review board to evaluate distribution and use of fees
• Combine education course with obtaining the license
• Require apprenticeship program to develop level of competence
• RS Qualification comes under blue crab licensing
• Provide copy of regulation with license
• Evaluate whether license is for the boat or person
• Transferable licenses- evaluate the possibility and make recommendations
• Endorsements on recreational licenses specifically for blue crab and fees collected support BCI
• Variance permits for idle zones- on universal basis - renewable at time of license renewals
• Support legislation for fee increases

Possible Objectives for Goal C: Education
• Involve department of agriculture
• Develop effective marketing campaign
• To consumers- benefits
• Restaurants and buyers
• Educate on how to navigate through a field of buoys
• Signage at boat ramps regarding violations and penalties
• Use fee structure to support educational
• Use recreational fees for education
• Promote positive image of crabbing in Florida
• Participants
• Product
• Developing courteous and ethical crabbing practices to avoid user conflicts
• Take proactive role in reducing user conflicts
• Statewide standardize test to get a license
• Develop tools such as quarterly/newsletters for better communication with the industry to discuss issues of concern supported by fees
• Involve universities including hotel management programs to market industry
• Work with DACS marketing people to help develop marketing tools
• Use portion of wholesale license fees going to DACS to specifically support blue crab marketing efforts
• Seek other funding sources to support education and marketing
• Expand use of electronic mediums to support marketing/education
• Require continuing education to maintain your endorsement
• Educate crabbers and enforcement people on what a peeler is and what is allowed

Possible Objectives for Goal D: Environmental Impacts
• Review manatee zone impacts on industry
• Sewage dumping impacts
• Freshwater run-off form WMD's work with districts to consider impacts
• Work with influence DEP's regulations as well as other agencies- DCA/WMD
• Develop process that integrate, crab industry comments to other agencies
• Waterfront owners and golf coursed of fertilizers- influence improvements
• Storm water runoff recommendations to eliminate/improve impacts
• Phosphate mining spills - compensation to BCI
• Impacts lost/derelict traps
• Trap removal should be done by commercial fishers not recreational - productive role by trappers- positive perception
• Dredging permits only allowed during low-peak seasons educate permit reviews on cycles/seasons of crabs and effect on industry
• Penalties for derelict traps that are left on purpose affects public’s perception law enforcement should enforce
• Industry should be allowed to work with derelict traps and proactive-exemptions process for pulling abandoned traps
• Keep enforcement notified of efforts to remove derelict traps (notify FWC)
• Require those who abandon traps to remove them
• Well managed traps benefit crabs- positive view- helps resources
• Use science / research to support that healthy traps enhance the resource - validate

Possible Objectives for Goal E: User Conflicts
• CRC to solve all problems
• Develop conflict resolution process and utilize professionals
• Use submerged gear that limits exposure to possible conflict with other users- evaluate impacts for different geographic areas
• Educate boaters on how to navigate around buoys
• Educate boaters on how to handle boats
• Orient traps so shrimpers can work around and avoid conflicts
• Look at and evaluate placement practices of traps
• Separate areas for different industries-zoned areas for shrimpers/crabbers
• Use tri-county licenses to reduce density issues
• Review use of floating ropes for blue crabs- including possible elimination of use in BCI
• Develop process to bring together user groups and related agencies to address conflicts
• Develop process to promote better working relationship between hard and soft crabbers
• Evaluate impacts - develop research to understand relationship between the two
• Look at harvesting impacts on respective crab populations
• Next meeting- provide information if available- stock assessment?
• Peelers should remain in-state - soft shells shipped out of state. Differentiate between peeler and soft shell industries- in evaluation and regulation (helps with thievery too)

Other Operational Issues
Staff asked board members if there were any additional operational issues that should be considered in a management plan. Members offered the following items for possible consideration:

• Gear specifications (e.g. trap size, degradable materials)
• Horizontal escape hatches in traps
• Rope types and materials
• Trap marking
• More information on possible conflicts between hard and soft crabbers

The facilitators and staff, with the permission of the board, will use the members’ comments to draft initial statements of objectives for review prior to the next advisory board meeting and additional discussion at the next meeting.

Draft Mission Statement

Members were presented with a proposed mission statement drafted by the facilitators from the invitation letter the members received from the agency to participate in the process. Members were asked to review, discuss and offer revisions to the draft statement. Using the scale below, members indicated a high degree of initial acceptability with the draft statement. The minor reservations and comments expressed by members were recorded and follow the initial ranking.

Draft Mission Statement:

The Florida Blue Crab Advisory Board, representing diverse stakeholder interests from around the state, will provide advice and guidance to the Commission and staff to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Florida’s blue crab fishery management program. The Board’s initial task will be to review, discuss and seek consensus on guidance and advice to the Commission for the development and adoption of a state blue crab management plan.

Initial Acceptability Ranking:

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<th>Consensus Scale</th>
<th>4=acceptable I agree</th>
<th>3=acceptable, I agree with minor reservations</th>
<th>2= not acceptable, major reservations must be addressed</th>
<th>1= not acceptable</th>
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Minor reservations and comments expressed by the members:

• Want to be sure we will have an opportunity to further refine the statement later in the process
• Should include a duty to ensure health and profitability of the industry
• Need to add “health and profitability of the blue crab industry
• Delete “to improve efficiency and effectiveness of” and add “that promotes improved profitability, industry image and resource stewardship under …”
• Bring back revised mission statement to the next meeting

The facilitators, with the permission of the board, will use the members’ comments to revise the statement for further review at the next meeting.

**Proposed Schedule and Next Steps**

The facilitators reviewed the proposed process schedule with the members (see appendix A) which calls for additional advisory board meetings in late October and early December, with an additional meeting, if necessary, in January. The members indicated a preference for all day one-day meetings. Members agreed to hold the next meeting on October 30, 2003 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, at the same location, after it was noted that more members could make that date. Facilitators and staff will work together to draft and distribute materials for members to review prior to the next meeting. Materials, reports and agendas will be made available to members in hard copy by mail, electronically by email and posted under the project name on the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium’s website, [http://consensus.fsu.edu/](http://consensus.fsu.edu/)

Bob Palmer thanked members for their participation and support of the process. He reminded members that they were representing other stakeholders and urged members to talk about the meetings and the materials with their respective constituencies prior to the next meeting. The members completed the comment and meeting evaluation forms (see Appendix B for results) and the meeting was adjourned.
Appendix A

Blue Crab Advisory Board Members:

Joe Barker
James Barwick
Kelly Beall
David Capo
Debra Creel
Dennis David
Martin Dunson
Theodore Firestine
Walter Flores
Robert Mostler
William Peters
Frank Sewell
George Sweetman
Gary Tillis
George Torres
Appendix B

MEETING EVALUATION FORM

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Blue Crab Advisory Board
September 23 & 24, 2003
Kissimmee, Florida

WERE THE MEETING OBJECTIVES MET?

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To review and refine consensus-building guidelines and participation guidelines
To review the role of the Advisory Board and the Blue Crab Management Plan Purposes;
To jointly review shared history, trends and helping and hindering forces affecting blue crab fishery in Florida;
To build consensus on a shared long term vision of success for blue crab fishery in Florida
To identify the vision themes and develop goals and related strategic and operational issues
To discuss, clarify and agree on the next steps needed to begin moving toward the strategic vision through the development of a strategic plan.

MEETING ORGANIZATION

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What Did You Like Best About the Meeting?
• Positive format
• Well organized and run well
• Advanced planning was effective
• Structure/ being focuses on one topic at a time
• Run smoothly and to the points
• Excellent attributes, good focus, good motivators
• Finished on time

What Could be Improved?
• Very little
• No idea at present, absorbed too much
• More assessments/studies available

Other Comments (continue on back if needed)

None were offered