Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Blue Crab Advisory Board

FACILITATOR’S REPORT OF THE OCTOBER 25 - 26, 2004 MEETING VI

Ocala, Florida

Meeting Design & Facilitation By

Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium

Report By Jeff A. Blair
Florida State University

jblair@fsu.edu
http://consensus.fsu.edu
OVERVIEW

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 (BCAB). 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. From September 2003 through June 2004, the advisory board has met five 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.

During the initial meeting of the Blue Crab Advisory Board on September 23-24, 2003, members worked through a process to develop goal statements and then identify possible key objectives or operational issues to be addressed in each goal area. During the second and third meetings on October 30 and December 3-4, members reviewed, discussed and refined an initial set of draft objectives. The facilitators redrafted the objectives based on member comments and created worksheets to guide discussion during the fourth meeting on January 6-7, 2004. Based on input from the advisory board in the first four meetings, the FWC staff prepared a workshop draft management plan for review by the Commission and conduct a series of regional input workshops during the spring.

The advisory board met again on June 4, 2004, to offer further guidance in response to input from the Commission and from the regional workshops. During the meeting members reviewed, discussed and refined the key elements of a potential effort management plan for staff to present to the Commission on June 9, 2004.

The Commission considered the Board’s revised recommendations and instructed them to consider the following refinements to their management plan recommendations:

- Develop recommendations related to a trap certificate program.
- Re-assess trap allotment (number of traps).
- Re-assess the proposed fee structure, and determine whether to lower them.
- Develop a process to provide fishery access to full time commercial fishers with an endorsement, but lacking sufficient landings—during the qualifying period—to qualify for entry into the industry.

The Board considered their previous recommendations in light of Commission feedback at the October 25 – 26, 2004 meeting, and the results of their deliberations are included in this report.
OVERVIEW OF BOARD’S KEY DECISIONS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25 & TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2004

Welcome and Introductions
Bill Teehan, Biological Administrator, welcomed members to the sixth meeting of the BCAB and stressed the value of the members’ ongoing participation and input into the development of a state management program responsive to the needs of the blue crab fishery. Facilitator 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).

Agenda Review and Approval
The Board voted unanimously, 15 - 0 in favor, to approve the agenda as presented including the following objectives:

- To approve regular procedural topics
- To hear Agency presentation on Commission feedback and recommendations related to BCAB recommendations
- To review and discuss Commission input on access management issues
- To refine, and seek agreement on revised management plan recommendations
- To test for Board consensus on revised draft management plan recommendations
- To identify needed information, agenda items, and next steps for developing recommendations

Approval of June 4, 2003 Facilitators’ Summary Report
The Board voted unanimously, 15 - 0 in favor, to approve the June 4, 2004 Facilitators’ Summary Report as presented.

Law Enforcement Report
Lt. George Portoff, FWC officer from the Saint Johns River area, reported on area enforcement efforts, including the successful arrest and conviction of an individual involved in trap theft.

Agency Presentation on Commission Feedback and Direction Related to Board Recommendations
The Agency presented the Board with the Commission’s feedback related to the Board’s current management plan recommendations, and provided data regarding trap numbers and landings and income and expense projections based on the proposed fee structure. In addition, Agency staff answered Board members questions.
The Commission instructed the Board to consider the following issues:

- Develop recommendations related to a trap certificate program.
- Re-assess trap allotment (number of traps).
- Re-assess the proposed fee structure, and determine whether to lower them.
- Develop a process to provide fishery access to full time commercial fishers with an endorsement, but lacking sufficient landings—during the qualifying period—to qualify for entry into the industry.

Review and Discussion of Commission Input on Management Plan Issues

Assessment of Threshold Issues by Straw Poll

Trap Certificate Program
The Board discussed at length a trap certificate program in lieu of the proposed limited entry program. After extensive discussion and evaluation of a trap certificate program, the facilitator took a straw poll of support for both options (trap certificate program and limited entry by license program). The results are that 1 person voted in favor of the trap certificate program, and 15 voted in favor of the limited entry program. The Board decided they would like another opportunity to present their rationale for a limited entry program to the Commission at the Commission’s December 2004 meeting, and agreed to elect two board members to attend and present the Board’s recommendations. Further, the Board felt that the lobster and stone crab industry are different from that of the Blue Crab industry, and on this basis any analyses and comparisons between the fisheries are not necessarily valid.

Special Consideration for Regional Hot Spot Areas (User conflicts)
The Board unanimously supported (16 – 0 in favor) developing options to deal with specific hot spot areas.

Reassessment of Management Plan Components
The Board unanimously supported (16 – 0 in favor) developing a mechanism to reassess and refine management plan recommendations based on future research and technical data, and field experience with the plan in place.

Working with the Commission
The Board unanimously supported (16 – 0 in favor) continuing to work with the Commission to reach consensus on a management plan.
Identification of Issues for Discussion
The Board identified the following list of issues for consideration and possible refinement.

- Hot spots
- Trap number
- People fishing other people’s licenses
- Qualifying years
- Develop a system to address full time fishers who don’t qualify (access to the fishery)
- Fees

Evaluation of Options
The Board evaluated option/s for each of the issues. Below are the acceptability rankings for the various options that were evaluated.

A. Hot spots:

1. Require a local license for those counties determined to be hotspots.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4=acceptable</th>
<th>3= minor reservations</th>
<th>2=major reservations</th>
<th>1= not acceptable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Ranking</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Revised/Amend</strong></td>
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2. Require a separate license fee for each county fished.

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<td><strong>Initial Ranking</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Revised/Amend</strong></td>
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3. Only allow crabbing in the home county of a crabber.

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<td><strong>Initial Ranking</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Revised/Amend</strong></td>
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4. A crabber can only fish in the three counties of their choice.

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<td>Initial Ranking</td>
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5. A crabber can fish their full allotment of traps in their 3 county region, but are allowed a substantially reduced number of traps outside of that region.

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<tr>
<td>Initial Ranking</td>
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6. Regional closures for hot spot areas through an executive director’s decision, and based on certain criteria being met.

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<tr>
<td>Initial Ranking</td>
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7. Fish trawls in hot spot areas based on achieving a density threshold level of traps.

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<tr>
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There were no consensus recommendations regarding the hot spot issue, but the Board was unanimous in their recognition that this issue should be considered and recommendations developed after the management plan has been implemented and evaluated.
B. Trap Number

1. Maintain the Number of Traps per V number per Board’s current recommendations – 650/450.

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<tr>
<td>Initial Ranking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
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C. People fishing other people’s licenses

1. Do not allow leasing or renting or otherwise utilization of license other than by SPL holder. Revised to include the sale of the product must be paid to the owner of the SPL.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Ranking</td>
<td>15</td>
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D. Qualifying Years (Access to Fisheries)

Extend qualifying years to two seasons prior to present qualifying seasons (98-99; 99-00). Revised ranking based on adding only one more year 99-00. Final revision based on maintaining the 3-year period in concert with the appeals board.

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<td>Revised/Amend</td>
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<td>Revised based on appeals</td>
<td>14</td>
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E. Appeals board (Access to Fisheries)

Maintain an appeals board function for the Advisory Board which will utilize a set of criteria for considering hardship cases for full time commercial fishers who have an endorsement, but lack sufficient landing during the qualifying period. There will be a trap bank from which to allocate traps that are sold to the bank out of the initial trap allotment.

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BCAB October 2004 Report 6
F. Fee Structure

The Board agreed unanimously (13 in favor, 1 abstention) to lower the initial tag fee to $0.50 and to maintain the renewal fee at $0.50. The Board agree to keep the endorsement for hard crabs at $125 and for soft shell crabs at $250.

Criteria for the advisory board appeal

The Board identified a preliminary list of criteria for appealing entry into the Blue Crab Fishery based on hardship and special circumstances. The Board will refine at subsequent meeting.

- Military service
- Medical reasons
- Leave the state
- Past fishing experience
- Wholesale dealers non-reporting for landings
- May consider landings outside of the qualifying year period for special circumstances
- Time limit for appeal process must be established

Package of Recommendations

Board Actions:

Motion—The Board voted unanimously, 14 - 0 in favor, to approve the revised package of recommendations for submittal to the Commission. The Board will review the package at their November meeting and finalize their recommendations and rationale. The package of recommendations includes their previous consensus recommendations together with the revisions made at the October 2004 meeting.

Refinements to BCAB Recommendations

The Board will assess and develop refinements to the management plan as part of their ongoing responsibilities. The Board will evaluate the plan based on the data and observations collected after the implementation of the Blue Crab Management Plan.

The Board will assess and develop recommendations for regional hotspots based on the implementation and evaluation of the Blue Crab Management Plan.

The Board will serve as an appeals board and develop a list of criteria for considering appeals for entry into the fishery for full time commercial fishers with an endorsement, but lacking sufficient landings during the qualifying period. The Board has developed a preliminary list of criteria. There will be a trap bank from which to allocate traps that are sold to the bank out of the initial trap allotment.

The Board agreed that there should be no leasing, renting, or any other utilization of licenses other than by the SPL holder. Further, the sale of the product (crabs) shall only be paid to the owner of the SPL.
The Board agreed to maintain the proposed fee structure with the exception of lowering the initial tag fee to $0.50.

Next Meeting
The Board will meet on Tuesday, November 16, 2004 to review their recommendations and provide rationale for the components of the package. The meeting will be in Ocala.

Board Representation to the Commission
Frank Sewell and David Capo were unanimously elected to represent the BCAB at the December Commission meeting.
ATTACHMENT 1

MEETING EVALUATION RESULTS

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Blue Crab Advisory Board

October 25 - 26, 2004
Ocala, Florida

0 TO 10 RATING SCALE WHERE A 0 MEANS TOTALLY DISAGREE AND A 10 MEANS TOTALLY AGREE.

1. Please assess the overall meeting.
   9.9 ___ The background information was very useful.
   9.9 ___ The agenda packet was very useful.
   10 ___ The objectives for the meeting were stated at the outset.
   9.8 ___ Overall, the objectives of the meeting were fully achieved.
   9.8 ___ Agency presentation on Commission feedback and rec.’s related to BCAB rec.’s.
   9.9 ___ Review and discussion of Commission input on access management issues.
   9.8 ___ Refinement and agreement on revised management plan recommendations.
   10 ___ Board consensus on draft revised management plan recommendations.
   10 ___ Next Steps and Agenda Items For Next Meeting.

2. Please tell us how well the facilitator(s) helped the participants engage in the meeting.
   9.9 ___ The participants followed the direction of the facilitator.
   10 ___ The facilitator made sure the concerns of all participants were heard.
   10 ___ The facilitator helped us arrange our time well.
   10 ___ Participant input was documented accurately.

3. What is your level of satisfaction with the meeting?
   10 ___ Overall, I am very satisfied with the meeting.
   10 ___ I was very satisfied with the services provided by the facilitator.
   10 ___ I am satisfied with the outcome of the meeting.

4. What progress did you make?
   10 ___ I know what the next steps following this meeting will be.
   10 ___ I know who is responsible for the next steps.

5. Do you have any other comments that you would like to add?
   • None provided.