

SE Florida Coral Reef Fisheries Stakeholder Committee - Meeting 9 part 1

Virtual meeting via Zoom
6-8 pm, Tuesday December 7th

Summary – December 7th

Overview

On Tuesday, December 7th the first part of two of the ninth Coral Reef Committee meetings was held virtually via Zoom. Project principal investigator Kai Lorenzen, facilitator Joy Hazell and co-facilitator Susana Hervas attended the meeting.

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

The meeting objectives were to:

- Review spatial management potential in the Coral ECA
- Identify criteria (if any) for consideration of various types of spatial management
- 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.)

Take home messages from Spatial Management Webinar

- Completely closed MPAs allow to have stronger rebound
- Closing something entirely would make most sense from what he was discussing, and where they had some protection and limited take, fish reproduction was not as strong as it was in the closed areas.
- Big question: how do you handle something like that?
- If you close something entirely, everything will get better but we are in a situation that with such a large area that supports such a large industry, then doing a complete closure doesn't make sense for a couple of reasons, 1 – people still need to fish, 2 – the big objective is to save the reefs, and everything points to water quality. We should address water quality first and then to management.

- FWC have been doing a good job with re restrictions and limits they have now. They could be much stronger, and some species could be closed during these sessions.
- We will talk not only about no take. Thing like live boards regulations for pump out would be an example of water quality spatial management
- This is still a complicated subject. A closed no take zone is a marine reserve, and an example is Riley's hump area in Dry Tortugas. Another example is an area where you do a management that is not a complete closure of any kind, and we have that in Penny Camp where we can't spearfish, or we have that in Everglades National Park, where there areas like snake bait, where we don't want people running with engines because they were running the fish off, and that is a marine protected areas, not a reserve. So we can look at protected areas like areas like areas with some kind of areas, some restriction, but no complete closures, and then the south marine reserve of Dry Tortugas as a no take zone. No scientist has ever said that we need to close everything. When you mention closing everything you scare the hell out of everyone including me. It's important not to say things like that because that brings the emotions up in the wrong direction
- Your emotions are already high and we want to be as rational as possible
- There are protected areas for birds, water quality, special regulations with poll and trawl, and that is what I think you were referring to.
- Time constrained protected also, like Wester dry rocks, during spawning season
- We have a huge water quality program, and FWC have a done a great job managing what they can, but we need a more sophisticated approach when it comes to fishing shut downs and boat and recreation shut down because it is a huge economic engine. We are all for clean boating and educated boaters and we want the resources there as much as everyone does, so lets look at it wit ha more surgical approach because we need to use the money that will come in to the state in the right places to fix water quality, and restrictions need to be made, to keep a fishery healthy. Closing for two years and see how it goes is not useful.
- To make sure I was not misunderstood, I was just talking about examples from the webinar video. I was relating to that. I am not a fan of complete closures.
- On closing areas, we will never fix the reefs if we don't stop these lobster trap ropes dragging across the reefs. Nothing will grow no matter what you do if traps aren't fixed. Some things are in water with growth and lot of fish around it.
- Something we are not talking about is filter feeders, clams were cleaned out of Broward County over the years. Now we have manatee die offs because seagrass is disappearing because of water quality and manatees are starving. We don't talk about this. And filter feeders clean out water. If we were to close something, let's close the harvest of filter feeders. Maybe get input from FWC to know what their programs are like.
- North Florida, there is harvest of shellfish, but in this area there is no allowed harvest of shell fish. There are clam and oyster programs to reestablish historic sites. They are on their way.
- In Indian River we participated with grant to recede areas with clams. But water quality is so bad that they are not able to do anything at the moment.
- We're talking about different types of spatial management. Could there be some management that said that all new seawalls or repaired seawalls or docks that go into this area have to have some type of living wall/living reef aspect to it? Could this be put into a spatial management program?

- Yes, I think it is, with GIS we could find the seawalls and other infrastructure and by doing a buffer or other GIS analysis we could figure out what areas need them, and then prioritize areas with criteria.
- Before we demand to the private sector, let state lead the process with their projects. They have the dollars and resources to implement it all. Let's have it be top down not bottom up.
- First round of it should be taken up by DoT and state-owned lands, prove of concept and get onto private businesses from then on.
- That's already going on in Palm Beach County. When they redid flagler drive, it's totally lined with rock rib crab, so it creates spaces for crabs and small fish and adds life to the seawall, so it is a win-win. Protects public investment and creates new habitat.
- Live shores is a program that has been going on for years. But municipalities and private homeowners have to buy into it, but it's an established thing.

Other comments

- This process is missing something. I would benefit greatly from having scientists who studied coastline conservation, estuaries, protected areas and the environmental areas of the ECA. Hard to make sounds recommendations without having some people who are really experts in these thins to give us advice.
- Reason we haven't done it is because the level of complexity is so high, we struggle to find someone who can address all the potential questions from one scientist or panel of scientists.
- If we could find something like the Tortugas where they have spawning of mutton snapper, if we have the science to back something up like that, then we should focus on something like that, but if we don't have the science then we will have to do a lot of research before we make that type of commitment.
- We will have you recommend conditions based on the science and then we can find answers to you questions. For example, you determine closing spawning aggregations, so we would then find the scientists to give the specifics. You would not need to come up with the where and when. After this, we can narrow down if we need more specific information from researchers.
- One of best sources for spawning aggregations are the people who fish, not scientists. I could tell you 15 spawning aggregations on this coast. We could all combine this information and have a pretty good idea of where they historically spawned. Scientists many times don't have the broad knowledge that we may have.

Small Group Activity

Objective: To create a set of criteria for spatial management

Three groups will discuss the same topic: potential spatial management

Everyone will have a chance to answer, and no decisions will be made today

Question: Under what conditions would you consider spatial management for... 1) water standards, 2) habitat, 3) groups of organisms or specific species, 4) fisheries status, and 5) access

Group 1 – Butch, Harry, Gary, Bruce

Under what conditions would you consider spatial management for the following:	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4	Condition 5	Comments
Water standards	dumping of sewage by vessels	if water quality in an area (ex. e coli) goes down	runoff levels exceed threshold			
Habitat	destructive anchoring by vessels	mooring buoys	trap lines causing damage	signage for critical seagrass beds		
Groups of organisms or specific species						
Fisheries Status						
Access						

Additional points:

- Some points were not addressed, we had a talk about drawing the nexus between the mantra of this group and protecting the reef and not getting on the slippery slope of, while we are talking about the reef, let’s morph into fisheries regulations. That was my problem about talking of fisheries status. So are we talking about fish or reef itself? Let’s not conflate reef welfare with fisheries management.
- Last two subjects were very broad.

Group 2 – Chuck, April, Marty

Under what conditions would you consider spatial management for the following:	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4	Condition 5	Condition 6	Condition 7	Condition 8	Condition 9	Comment
Water Quality standards	Run - off and Sewer and Septic Issues	Spills	Increased enforcement of offshore dumping and better training of the enforcement officers	Mooring fields where appropriate	Point source (inlets and discharges)	If there is a large area of coral - need to look at that	adaptable restriction - increase standards for WQ and response times for dredging etc.	Look at coastline all over state of florida - lost mangrove shorelines - do a better job of restructuring mangrove shorelines where they belong - reestablish living shorelines	Increase mitigation standards to restore more mangroves	Look at legislation and criminal vs. civil standards
Habitat	depending on density and amount of corals (i.e enforcement)	If you have a breathing or spawning area for coral	anywhere we have an identified problem caused by different excursions by people we should create some mgmt that limits that -	tools are in place for some speed and safety zones, keeping people in channel	Tools are in place to create habitat, need tools to maintain habitat when it is in place (unknown territory on success of project) - update/adaptiv	Note-not seeing as many crabs or sea urchins - explore introduction programs in partnerships				every flat that needs to be protected identified as a management area where high impact actions shouldn't be

			becomes a special management area (i.e. seadoos tearing up flats)		e science on transplantation/ restoration project					allowed * Need to look at historical data to inform projects
Groups of organisms or specific species	Spawning aggregations - I.D.areas that have very successful spawning aggregations should be completed closed (marine reserve) year round because they have special circumstances that are good for multiple species	Identify known and historical spawning areas	Note-not seeing as many crabs or sea urchins - explore introduction programs in partnership	Spawning aggregations - could still do pelagic on surface in areas of bottom reef fish spawning	Establish scientific metrics for spawning aggregations and have adaptive management					
Fisheries Status	Happy with FWC's current actions	Social media from the committee - share info with FWC	Size/Bag limits have been outstripped by the number of anglers in our environment - listen to							

			scientist that say we need to close some areas to let fish to grown and spawn							
Access	Be very careful - how we are going to manage. Something on the chart and known and enforced -- huge education point, signs aren't always the answer	When we consider access consider spatial management and if you completely close an area consider other area's impacts	management areas are low hanging fruit							

Group 3 – George, Tom, Dan, Trip

Under what conditions would you consider spatial management for the following:	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4	Condition 5	Comments
Water standards	Chemical spraying taking away vegetation - seasonal spraying and mechanical Cut chemical spraying and go back to mechanical	Leakage of septic tanks Raw sewage out of water	^^ there are other initiatives that could deal with water standards but no funding or political will. e.g. big development upstream water retention	Right time to fertilize and wrong time. And right and wrong type of fertilizer.		
Habitat	southern Florida estuaries - replanting seagrass (inshore) (offshore) design concrete artificial reefs	replanting seagrass (won't work with poor wq) signage of shallow water to stay away from seagrass areas to avoid no entry zones	designation pole and troll zones helped sensitive areas offshore - no anchor zones for sensitive habitats. create designated areas. building artificial reefs also for spawning aggregates (red ns, snowy gr) - create a new spot that can be protected, allow surface but not bottom drifting	inshore artificial reefs		
Groups of organisms or specific species	Spawning aggregations key spawning times should be no take	Spawning aggregations key spawning times should be no take	long spine sea urchin and bivalves - specific strategies to enhance animals in their places			
Fisheries Status	FWC and NOAA to set the standard and tweak by reduce bag limits, sizes, seasons, etc. If species is suffering then FWC can manage case by case	^^e.g. Biscayne Bay tweaked limits	FWC responsive localized in inshore			
Access						

Discussion

- Areas of agreement
 - Concern about sewage and mooring buoys
 - Artificial reefs to replicate corals that we lost. Coral disease got to the Tortugas so we need to look at alternatives for the reefs that we are losing. It won't be coral but we need something to create habitat (in common with group 3)
 - Big connector is water quality
 - Have to look at bigger picture. The whole area, the whole climate is evolving, and as we evolve, how is the picture going to be, what is the science going to tell us. Right now it is water quality, but will we ever be able to bring it back, or because of climate change and other issues, is it going to change, and how can we improve the fisheries because of all that. It's interesting and a challenge and need to be adaptable
 - In line with that, we have the perfect storm here. Between environmentally what we have done, screwups we have done in Florida, starting with channelizing the everglades. Now we have climate change a big unknown, but it won't be good. So anything we try to do is a huge unknown. We might not be able to affect a reasonable change within a lifetime.
 - Water quality is a huge problem, and there is a billion of dollar tags for these projects. We need to make recommendations, but from Lake Okeechobee down we have a huge series of disasters all of which are a multi billion dollar projects. We need to look at what we can do. Fear is that money won't be going to these big issues.
 - Water quality seems insurmountable, but they have cleaned up Lake Erie, we can clean up Lake Okeechobee, and we can make progress. I am not going to give up on clean water. And we can start on the inside and work out. It might not solve climate change but we can clean up the lake and the estuaries going to it. And we need to tackle the Mississippi too, which affects the keys and is a bigger polluter than Lake Okeechobee. We need all to be on the same boat to tackle the problem. If we say that we cannot do it, then it won't get done.
- What were the areas of large disagreement
 - Areas of large disagreement: complete closures.
 - Common thread is that closed zones, as recreational anglers, a lot of us are fearful and don't want them. But then, others in the group are fully for them.
 - 100% closures are the disagreement parts. Partial, spawning, no anchor, and other regulations but not 100% closures unless it is clear that an area should be closed.
 - Use adaptive management. Whatever we back might not be correct, so let's have a system in place that can adapt.
 - Limited input from scientists said that fish stocks are in decline. Water quality issues are huge but some of the marine protected area issues are low hanging fruit that can be implemented.
 - We have put such pressure on this reef from Martin County to Dry Tortugas that some reef fish are depleted. When huge grouper or snapper spawns release thousands of eggs. MPAs have been successfully in Dry Tortugas and Florida Keys Sanctuary. We can look at water quality but we can create a network of marine reserves that are scientifically put in the right place, agree to it, and see a lot of more fish in five years from now.
 - Pie chart in Dry Tortugas showed that there was still degradation in Dry Tortugas

- Study in Australia shows no improvement with MPA implementation
- Some scientists are all for it, and others do not support it. MPAs should be the last resort
- MPA is zero cost in implementation and high impact cost for marine industry, tourist industry, etc.
- Recommend regulation on the less restrictive side
- Everyone who is in this committee cares
- Group has come a long way
- What is the mantra of this group? From what I understood it's all about the welfare of the reef

Adjourn



Fisheries and Conservation in the SE Florida Reef Tract: A New Stakeholder Process – Meeting 9.1

UF | **IFAS Extension**
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

NRLI
NATURAL RESOURCES LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

SFRC SCHOOL OF FOREST RESOURCES & CONSERVATION

Review spatial management potential in the Coral ECA

Identify criteria (if any) for consideration of various types of spatial management

Co-develop survey for constituency



Objectives



Agenda

- 6:00 Welcome: Agenda and Reminders
- 6:15 Webinar Recap
- 6:45 Spatial Management Criteria
- 7:15 Report Out and Discuss
- 7:45 Wrap up
- 8:00 pm Adjourn

Group Norms

Customs, habits and expectations for how things will be done



- ***Listen carefully***
- ***Consider each idea***
- Everyone participates
- No one dominates
- ***Tough on the issues, not on the people***
- Minimize distractions

Zoom Related

- Keep your camera on
- Wave your hand to make a comment
- Unmute to speak

Clarifications



This is challenging discussion – strong feelings on each side

We (UF/DEP/FWC) have no preconceived ideas of how this should come out

We (UF/DEP/FWC/Hopefully you) do want a robust and respectful discussion

I will be facilitating carefully

Sunshine Laws

- Public can attend the meeting
- Reasonable notice of meetings
- Minutes recorded and open to public

- The law, in essence, is applicable to any gathering, whether formal or casual, of two or more members of the same board or commission to discuss some matter on which foreseeable action will be taken by the public board or commission.

<https://myfloridalegal.com/pages.nsf/Main/DC0B20B7DC22B7418525791B006A54E4>



Spatial Management Webinars – Take Home Messages

What different types of spatial management did you hear about during the webinar?



Criteria for Spatial Management

Think about when certain types of spatial management should be established and where.

- Managed areas can regulate a variety of things with differing goals
 - Water standards
 - Habitat
 - Groups of organisms or specific species
 - Fisheries status
 - Access
- Consider the different classifications discussed earlier and when each could be warranted

Classifications

1) Conservation Focus

- Natural Heritage
- Cultural Heritage
- Sustainable Production

2) Level of Protection Afforded

- Uniform Multiple-Use
- Zoned Multiple-Use
- Zoned with No-Take Areas
- No Take
- No Impact
- No Access

3) Permanence of Protection

- Permanent
- Conditional
- Temporary

4) Constancy of Protection

- Year-round
- Seasonal
- Rotating

5) Ecological Scale of Protection

- Ecosystem
- Focal Resource

Small Group Activity

Objective:

- To create a set of criteria for spatial management

Activity (30 mins)

3 groups. Each group will discuss criteria for the same topic:

- **Potential Spatial Management**



Directions

1. Everyone will have a chance to answer under all potential management goals using a structured go around tool
2. We are just brainstorming – no decision will be made today

Under what conditions would you consider spatial management for:

- Water standards
- Habitat (i.e. coral/seagrass/nursery habitat)
- Groups of organisms or specific species
- Fisheries status
- Access

Under what conditions would you consider spatial management for the following:

	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4	Condition 5
Water standards	If live aboards were dumping				
Habitat	Pole and troll zones for seagrasses				
Groups of organisms or specific species	Spawning aggregations for sportfish				
Fisheries Status	Evidence of localized overfishing				
Access	Anchoring restrictions to protect corals				

Final
Questions for
the Day

- Where was there common ground?
- Where is there disagreement?