



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

## **Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel and Golden Crab Advisory Panel Meeting Summaries**





# **MEETING AGENDA**

The Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel met in Key Largo, Florida on June 29, 2022.

- Fishery Performance Report update.
- Trap Closed Area Review
- Recent Topics at Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission



Thank you to Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission staff, especially Tom Matthews, who participated in the Spiny Lobster AP meeting. Staff provided valuable information and insight into current spiny lobster research

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# FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## *Environmental Factors:*

- Fishermen have seen a significant change in habitat and the Spiny Lobster fishery since Hurricane Irma.
  - Increased algal blooms and damaged corals.
  - Some areas with damaged corals are starting to improve.

## *Lobster Population*

- In Florida, fishermen are seeing a lot of small lobsters in the fishery and the population appears to be healthy.
- In North Carolina and Georgia, the population is increasing. There have even been sightings of lobster in nearshore waters along bridges and pilons.

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# FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## *Social and Economic Influences*

- User group conflicts are common in Florida Keys, especially between trap fishermen and recreational boaters.
- Lack of available crew has caused significant issues in the spiny lobster fishery down in Florida.
  - Boats are having to fish fewer days due to lack of crew.
  - The Florida Keys is too expensive for crew members to live and reliable transportation from areas outside the Keys is a challenge.
  - It is important to have knowledgeable crew to prevent citations for things like undersized lobster.



# FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## *Social and Economic Influences cont.*

- Participation in the fishery is still going strong. While many older fishermen are retiring there are a lot of young fishermen getting into the fishery and learning from them.
- The Florida Keys are reliant upon the Spiny Lobster fishery.
- COVID-19 had a significant negative economic effect on the fishery.
  - The Chinese market was inconsistent in 2020 and 2021, especially during the new year when prices have historically been the highest.

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# FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## *Management Measures*

- Fishermen in North Carolina would like the opportunity to harvest a commercial amount of spiny lobster. It does not make sense to hold commercial fishermen to the recreational bag limit.
  - AP members requested information on the biology of the stock to help determine what level of harvest could be supported.
- Trap fishermen in Florida have concerns about allowing casitas in the spiny lobster fishery.

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# **AMENDMENT 11 TRAP CLOSED AREAS**

- Advisory Panel members would like to see the areas that were closed to traps via Spiny Lobster Amendment 11 revisited to ensure that there are still corals within those areas.
  - This will be important as the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Blueprint moves forward.
- Many of these closed areas remain unmarked and not included in many GPS systems. Especially as new fishermen enter the fishery, it will be important to spread knowledge of these areas to other fishermen.

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# FL FWC Management Topics

## ***Items FWC considering for rulemaking***

- Trap permanent marking requirements
- Degradable panels
- Trap puller prohibition on recreational vessels
- Working definition

## ***FWC Commissioners have been discussing casitas***

## ***Biscayne National Park***

- Legare anchorage – no trap proposal at Sept FWC mtg

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# **MEETING AGENDA**

The Golden Crab Advisory Panel met in Key Largo, Florida on June 30, 2022.

- Fishery Performance Report update.
- Discussion of Advisory Panel composition.



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# FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## *Golden Crab Population and Landings*

- Fishermen are seeing many smaller crabs, especially throughout the Northern and Middle Zones. Overall, the fishery appears to be very healthy.
- There was a downward trend in landings after 2015.
  - This may be impact from Deepwater Horizon, as many of the female crabs come from the Gulf of Mexico.
  - More likely, it was a reflecting of participation in the fishery. Fewer boats have been participating in recent years.



# FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## *Social and Economic Influences*

- COVID19 had a big impact on the golden crab fishery. While some product is sold domestically, the majority is sold overseas. During COVID19 there were few flights to export product or boats would be unable to get into port due to shutdowns.
- Price of golden crab right now is at an all time high because there are quota shortages in other live crab fisheries such as king crab and Dungeness crab out west.

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# **FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

## *Social and Economic Influences*

- Loss of working waterfronts and infrastructure has caused issues for the golden crab fishery.
  - There is nowhere in southern Florida to dock a deep-water vessel and find commercial necessities (ice, fuel, etc.)
- There has been some transition in the fishery, with former fishermen retiring and others entering the fishery.

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# FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## *Management Measures*

- Advisory Panel members are comfortable with the current zone management and annual catch limit.
- They would like to see the current coral closed areas revisited. There are some areas that are closed to golden crab harvest that are mud bottom and do not contain any coral.
- The golden crab fishery is very clean, the traps rarely catch anything but golden crab and a few isopods and rocks.
  - An American lobster was caught once.





# **ADVISORY PANEL COMPOSITION**

- Advisory Panel members that are no longer participating in the fishery (have sold their permits) would like to remain able to participate on the advisory panel.
  - These fishermen have been working in the fishery since its inception in the 1990s and provide significant institutional knowledge that could help inform future advisory panel discussions.

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**QUESTIONS?**