

Public Hearing Comments for Spiny Lobster Amendment 11

Three people provided public testimony on Spiny Lobster Amendment 11 at the public hearing in Key Largo. All were members of Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association and one was also a member of Organized Fishermen of Florida. One individual commented on Amendment 11 at the Cocoa Beach Hearing.

Written comments included correspondence from Congresssman Bill Posey.

Action 1:

- Two commenters in support of the proposed closed areas in Preferred Alternative 3, and commented on that they appreciated industry involvement in the process.
- All commenters noted that anchors and recreational divers also have a significant impact on the corals, and the Council should look at that also.
- Commenters recommended modifying the following areas:
 - Site 14- modify in order to set a depth line of 45ft to inshore, because over 45 ft is a sand lake. This is a very productive area and would cause crowding in other areas.
 - Site 15- split up.
 - Site 30- it is a long piece of bottom and not all needs to be closed off; consider splitting in half.
- Commenters with recommendations for the above changes noted that in the Upper Keys they have many closed areas including Everglades National Park closed areas, Biscayne National Park closed areas, and Pennekamp State Park, and they are already squeezed for fishing grounds, so would like to find ways to protect the coral while leaving the most available area for the traps.
- One commenter opposed closed areas unless the proposed closures were developed and supported by industry members.
- One commenter opposed any additional closed areas.

Action 2:

- All commenters in support of the Preferred Alternative 1, and noted that requiring a trap line marking would be very expensive and time-consuming for the fishermen.

CONGRESSMAN BILL POSEY (FL-15)
STATEMENT
Golden tilefish, spiny lobster, golden crab
FEDERAL FISHERIES PUBLIC HEARING
January 31, 2012

On behalf of the thousands of commercial and recreational fishermen in my district and across the state, I voice my strong opposition to further proposed limits to the golden tilefish and broad area closures and gear markings for the commercial spiny lobster fishery and a catch share program for the harvest of golden crab **unless they are requested, developed, modified or agreed to by the fishing industry** working in conjunction with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

These measures will impact both commercial and recreational fishermen who fish in federal waters between 3 and 200 miles offshore ranging from North Carolina to the Florida Keys. It is critical that we work together to create the right kind of balance for golden tilefish, spiny lobster fisheries and golden crab.

The current process often fails to consider the unintended consequences resulting in a disastrous impact on many individuals and businesses, such as those commercial and recreational fishermen who may be put out of business.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council needs to take into account the socioeconomic impact of regulations on fishermen and fishing communities as stipulated in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This provision of the law has been all but ignored in recent federal rulemaking processes.

Florida, one of the states hit hardest by the current economic downturn, depends heavily on the fishing and tourism industries to provide employment for our residents and to generate tax dollars for the state. In fact, in Florida alone, the saltwater fishing industry contributes more than \$5 billion a year of economic output, resulting in nearly \$380 million in federal tax revenues per year.

Last year's oil spill in the Gulf negatively impacted the lives of those in Florida who depend on the ocean for their livelihood. Further needless limitations on those same Florida fishermen will further harm our economy.

We must continue to secure accurate information on the health and status of these federally managed species. The Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service needs to move toward **“Cooperative Management”** by working with the fishing industry to conduct economic impact assessments for the communities affected by further proposed restrictions. Putting fishermen in the unemployment line based on faulty or incomplete science is simply wrong.

These fisheries directly employ several thousand specialized workers with many locally based jobs and businesses that depend on these important fishing industries. Many in our community are struggling to keep their doors open, and it is important that any decisions that adversely affect jobs are made based on sound reasons and the best science.

It is important to conserve fish species for the future, but we can and must do so in such a way that also preserves the fishing industry and economic livelihood of many thousands of Floridians.

A better line of communication between Federal officials at NOAA and the communities who are suffering is critical in solving this problem. There has been a lack of attention on the part of the Federal government to ensure that they are using solid science, which is a major point of contention. Also, there seems to be a real disconnect and I don't think Federal officials truly understand how devastating their decisions have been to local fisherman, their families and our economy in general. Hopefully we can work together to reach agreements that satisfy everyone's concerns but as of right now the current state of management is unacceptable.

I ask that the Council listen to the views and input from the affected communities and individuals. Take those into consideration and work with them to implement wiser policies.

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