

SAFMC Law Enforcement Advisory Panel Meeting - July 20, 2011, Orlando, FL

Report: Outreach Efforts for Special Management Zones

Overview

Council staff (Kim Iverson) provided members of the Council's Law Enforcement Advisory Panel with an overview of the issues regarding a new collaborative outreach effort between St. Lucie County Florida Mosquito Control and Coastal Management Services, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. An "issues paper" provided by Jim Oppenborn (St. Lucie Co.) was distributed to the AP, highlighting the intent to increase public awareness of fishing regulations associated with Special Management Zones off of St. Lucie County (Ft. Pierce area) and perhaps utilize the outreach efforts in a broader campaign throughout the east coast of Florida and South Atlantic region.

There are currently 3 artificial reefs in federal waters off of St. Lucie County designated as SMZs. Gear prohibitions are in place for various SMZs throughout the South Atlantic region, and may vary according to location. Regulations include prohibiting the use of bottom longlines, fish traps, electric reels for targeting species in the snapper grouper management complex except when mounted on a handheld rod, and powerhead gear.

Currently, information available to the public regarding SMZs is limited. There is a brief overview of SMZs on the Council's website at www.safmc.net with a link to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) outlining the location/coordinates and restrictions for SMZs. The language in the CFR is difficult to follow and there are no visual maps. There is no information available at the local level.

Recommendations

Members of the LE AP provided the following recommendations (in no order of preference):

1. Mark the areas with buoys – utilize buoys similar to those currently being used by the National Marine Sanctuary program.
2. Make website information more user friendly – include plain language describing location of sites and include maps.
3. Create a booklet/handout similar to the Council's Deepwater MPA Regulations brochure with a list of regulations, maps and coordinates.
4. Use kiosks at boat ramps – include general information about SMZs, similar to the Sanctuary information currently displayed.
5. Have a defined VHF channel dedicated to announcing fishing regulations, including SMZs.
6. Distribute written materials at major retail outlets where fishing licenses are sold, e.g., Walmart, Boat US/West Marine, etc.

7. Utilize social media such as Facebook, YouTube, etc. for distribution of information.
8. Work with GPS manufacturers to include SMZ information/regulations in updates that fishermen upload to their units.
9. Develop a regulations App for mobile devices that includes SMZ information.
10. Make announcements and bulletins smart phone ready.
11. Use pod casts.
12. Create a short video for distribution/use at area hotels for inclusion in their “local information” channel.
13. Create PSA (similar to video in #12) for use by cable companies.
14. Develop a general information poster relative to SMZs highlighting websites where more detailed information can be found. Distribute posters at boat ramp kiosks, bait and tackle stores, marinas, etc.
15. Include SMZ information in Google Earth layers.

Follow Up

Members of the LE AP agreed there is a need for increased outreach associated with SMZs and will develop a letter to the Council supporting the collaborative outreach efforts.