

CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM: MEETING II SUMMARY REPORT



Photo by Thalita Ribeiro



CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM:

Providing a venue for public engagement in local fisheries issues and building links between stakeholder knowledge, science, and management



Photo: Thalita Ribeiro

January 22nd, 2015

Thursday, 6-8:30 pm

Laishley Marina
120 Laishley Ct.
Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Charlotte and Lee anglers: your knowledge can help local fisheries thrive.

Join local researchers for the second meeting of the Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum!
Meeting goals: continue forward with outlining forum structure and action plan.

Guest Speaker: Dave Blewett
FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
Charlotte Harbor Field Lab

Contact: Capt. Betty Staugler, UF / Florida Sea Grant , Charlotte County
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Forum Partners:

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA



Sea Grant
Florida

Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum 2 – January 22nd, 2015.

Laishley Marina.

120 Laishley Ct., Punta Gorda, FL. 33950

Report

On Thursday, January 22nd, 2015, Florida Sea Grant Extension and the University of Florida (UF) convened the meeting to facilitate the development of a Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum. The meeting in Punta Gorda, Florida, was open to the general public and participants were invited through emails, local media, fliers distributed locally, and personal invitations.

In total, 19 fisheries stakeholders signed in for the second forum meeting (“stakeholders” is defined as anyone who has an interest, or stake, in fish, fishing, and fisheries). Local Florida Sea Grant agent Captain Betty Staugler (Charlotte County) led and facilitated the meeting. UF researchers Dr. Kai Lorenzen, Dr. Juliane Struve, and Dr. Jynessa Dutka-Gianelli and graduate student Chelsey Crandall were also present.

The Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum is a collaborative effort to provide a venue for public engagement in local fisheries issues and to build links between stakeholder knowledge, science, and management. The objectives of this second meeting were to continue forward with outlining the forum structure and action plan.

After research team introductions, facilitator Captain Betty Staugler explained the meeting agenda and objectives, and ground rules for the meeting were agreed upon. Next, stakeholders introduced themselves and briefly explained how they are connected with Charlotte Harbor fisheries. Dr. Kai Lorenzen then presented a short overview of the project objectives and forum definition, followed by a short summary of the first forum meeting discussions presented by Mr. Jim Cooper of Lemon Bay Conservancy. Dave Blewett, a biologist from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) Charlotte Harbor Field Laboratory then gave a presentation about FWRI’s local fisheries independent research and stakeholders engaged in an active discussion about local fisheries and issues. Stakeholders pointed out some ways in which their experiences with local fisheries contrasted with FWRI data, especially regarding redfish.

Following this, all participants continued brainstorming as a large group to discuss the following topics:

- **Who should be involved in the forum?**

Participants suggested that county commissioners, chamber of commerce, law enforcement, and all boaters should be invited to the forum meetings as well.

- **Who from the stakeholders list created should be included in the “forum core group?”**

Participants decided to wait until there are more people involved with the forum before deciding on creating a core group. It is necessary to have more people involved to get

community impact. They want to increase regional representation, engage more people, and keep the forum open, wishing to raise the number of participants. The participants suggested that if other stakeholders knew about the forum meetings, they would come to the meetings. Everyone agreed to invite others for the next forum; the facilitator and researchers would try to engage the media as well.

- **What will happen next?**

Participants mentioned that providing a list of accomplishments for every meeting would help to keep people motivated. Also, participants inquired how the ideas organized during the forum would be transmitted to managers from FWC. They suggested having a representative from FWC present during the forum meetings.

- **What topics should the forum focus?**

The group suggested narrowing down the potential topics for forum discussions during the next meeting, possibly to five topics to start. Many are concerned with fish habitat and water quality, fisheries decline, recreational and commercial fisheries issues, and local fish stocks. Education of anglers, residents, and tourist, and outreach programs should be emphasized as well. A suggestion from participants was to figure out a way to investigate why scientific data and angler data might differ (e.g., redfish).

- **Forum evaluation and feedback:**

The final activity of the meeting was a series of evaluation questions to assess the success of the meeting and to gather participants' suggestions on how to improve future meetings.