

CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM: MEETING III SUMMARY REPORT



Photo: Joy Hazell



CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM:

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



Photo: Joy Hazell

February 26nd, 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 third meeting of the Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum!

What topics or issues should the forum focus on?

Meeting goals: to discuss and decide on key topics.

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Forum Partners:

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA



Sea Grant
Florida

Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum 3 – February 26th, 2015.
Laishley Marina.
120 Laishley Ct., Punta Gorda, FL. 33950

Report

On Thursday, February 26th, 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.

Sixty seven stakeholders turned out for this third forum meeting, representing recreational and commercial anglers, local fishing club members, charter captains and guides, business owners, researchers, local media, tourism, part-time residents, and law enforcement. Florida Sea Grant agent Joy Hazell (Lee County) led and facilitated the meeting. University of Florida researcher 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 third meeting were to discuss the forum structure, to discuss and decide on key topics, and to brainstorm engagement and communication strategies. After the research team introductions, Jynessa Dutka-Gianelli 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. Then, Chelsey Crandall presented a short overview of the project objectives and forum definition, followed by a short summary of the previous forum meeting discussions presented by Captain Jay Whithers.

Following a short question and answer session, participants briefly talked about potential topics for forum discussions that were suggested by participants in the last Charlotte Harbor fisheries forum (January 22, 2015): water quality, habitat, fish populations, declining of fish stocks, recreational and commercial fisheries issues, outreach and education, disconnect between scientific data and angler observations (e.g., redfish), natural environmental fluctuations, the possibility of a local hatchery, and the need for an increase in law enforcement. Participants also discussed the pros and cons of waiting until the forum group becomes more organized before inviting Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) managers to attend a meeting and in the end opted to wait. The group also emphasized the need to get better organized before possibly creating a “forum core group.”

Facilitator Joy Hazell led the next forum activity, which focused on brainstorming and then beginning to narrow down potential topics for the forum to focus on.

Part I: Potential Topics Brainstorm: What are some issues that the forum could focus on?

Participants were asked to write on sticky notes potential key topics for the forum to focus on and then to attach each note to the wall. Next, the notes were sorted and categorized into major topics by the whole group.

Brainstorm Results:

Water Quality

Stop failing septic

Aging septic systems polluting harbor

Nonpoint source pollution: lawns, roads, septic

Run off-herbicides, pesticides killing seagrass and oysters

Runoff: pesticides, herbicides, fuel, fertilizers, etc. ending up in the water can't be helping things

Ban all fertilizer

Phosphate issues: mine and residential, nonpoint source

Pollution

What are the point sources of pollution into Charlotte Harbor? Where are they?

Stop pollution from mining

Phosphate, nitrates, agriculture, pollution, herbicide, pesticides

Red Tide (X2 = written on two cards)

Identify water quality problems in our small creeks and large rivers, then develop solutions to help correct those problems

Water pollution: algae bloom (picture included)

Turbidity: suspended silt prevents grass from growing, and the exposed mud then produces more silt every time a wave or wake goes by

Chemical assay changing

Monitoring/evaluation of water quality to assess trends

Flow of water in Harbor? Boca Grande pass clean up/dredge

Boater Behavior

Pole/troll zones (X6 = written on 6 cards)

Pole/troll: boater traffic is ripping up the grass and scattering fish

Running the shoreline with tower boats, spooking the fish, affecting their habitats; make pole or troll zones

Boat traffic, pole and troll in flats area; too many new type shallow racing boats on flats

High speed boat traffic impact on habitat and fish populations

Boats running at high speeds next to mangroves

Burning shorelines along islands and east and west side of Harbor

Boaters burning shorelines; implements protection of shorelines

Pole and troll or idle zones in certain areas of sensitive habitat

Prop scars on seagrass bed

Habitat

Oyster and seagrass restoration

Loss of oyster beds

Seagrasses: increased activity vs. more fish (more happy fish)

Protect and increase marsh habitat for juvenile fish

More artificial reefs to provide fish habitat in the Harbor and the Gulf

Artificial reefs

Establish numerous small artificial reef plots

Seagrasses: prop scars

Hatchery

Measure effectiveness

Better fish stocking programs

Contribution influences on results

Restock of redfish/snook

Salt water hatcheries

Redfish hatchery program for Charlotte Harbor

Outreach

Educate visitors on responsible fishing

Teach proper fishing (tackle used, how to de-hook, release of fish, how to hold)

How to create resident ambassadors to act as champions of the Harbor: reasons why Harbor important to community

Teach all boaters proper etiquette, distance of other boats/respect

Programs for education on water etiquette

Boater education is key, but there's no boat license test required in Florida

For me involving kids and adults toward education (how to handle fish, catch and release)

Fish Populations

Rec vs. commercial: what (how much) is commercial catch? Because that can explain where the fish to that the scientists say are there

Reduce commercial shrimping

Shrimping in Charlotte Harbor

Shrimp fishing effect on habitat

Bycatch effect on fishery

Too much mullet netting

Netting in Charlotte Harbor for mullet

Mullet fishermen

Professional fishermen keep only female mullets and throw out males this is spoil our beaches

Out of state mullet fishermen deplete bait stocks and damage grassbed habitats

Close seasons partially for redfish

Stop tournaments

Advocate catch/release

Target abundant fish stocks, take advantage of what we do have! (example: sheepshead, mackerel)

Recreational fishing: provide more opportunities for fishermen who want to pursue fish by pole and troll methods

Create a website where recreational fishermen can report catch; after a few years it will give good data

Learn more about critical habitat for juvenile redfish; habitat needs at different sites (research)

Redfish populations: how to provide more redfish

Excessive pressure on fish populations

What is the causation of declining fish populations?

Is overfishing a problem in Charlotte Harbor?

Overfishing (e.g., getting greedy when the breeders are spawning)

Fishing pressure (recreational, tournament, etc.) impact on fish populations

Fish populations: more people, less fish, less quality, less grass

Decline in bait (food) for fish (game) to eat

Food? Bait

Depleting baitfish stocks

Enforcement/Regulations

Support enforcement to enforce existing rules

End user forum to evaluate laws/regulation



Workshop Activity: brainstorming potential forum topics.

Part II: Narrowing Down: What are your top five?

Next, participants were split into eight small groups and asked to select their “top five” topics from the brainstormed list. One stakeholder from each small group reported back their group list to all participants and facilitator Joy Hazell wrote down all eight groups’ ideas to see if any common topics emerged. Results are summarized below:

Water quality (8 groups)

- Better water quality
- Water quality (limit fertilizer input)
- Water quality (enforce point source and non-point pollution laws (fertilizers)
- Septic, run-off on roads, pesticides and fertilizers
- Water quality (nps and phosphate, mining)
- Identify the worst sources of nps and work to eliminate
- Nutrients, algae, contaminants and their influence on food and habitat
- Evaluate trends in water quality for fish populations

Pole and troll zones (6 groups)

- Establish pole and troll zones in selected areas
- Establish pole and troll zones
- Implement pole and troll, no wake zone
- Pole and troll (fines for ripping seagrasses)
- Pole and troll maybe adjacent to parks and sunset clause to see if working
- No internal combustion motorized zone (pole and troll) with weather exemptions and idle zone passage way ways

Habitat (4 groups)

- Loss of grass beds (replanting)
- Habitats (especially seagrasses)
- Mitigate physical (prop scars) and chemical impacts on habitat
- Need for beach renourishment versus habitat destruction tradeoffs

Boaters (3 groups)

- Boater licensing
- Outreach education: boater responsibilities for preservation and enforcement
- Restrict shoreline running

Tournaments (2 groups)

- Restrict redfish tournament
- Too many tournaments

Commercial Fishing (2 groups)

- Less netting of mullet and bait
- Limit commercial (out of state) mullet fishing, and shrimping dragging in the harbor)

Hatchery (2 groups)

- Redfish Hatchery
- Hatchery to build fish stocks

Artificial reefs (2 groups)

- Artificial reefs in Charlotte Harbor (Δ in target species)
- Build more artificial reefs

Law Enforcement (2 groups)

- FWC law enforcement support
- Increase law enforcement presence based on number of fishing and hunting licenses

Research (2 groups)

- Research on fish population (habitat and life history)
- Investigate disconnect between theoretical and practical observations in fish stocks

Water flow (2 groups)

- Water flow management (Boca Grande)
- Tidal flushing increased through passes including passes

Regulations (1 group)

- Institute regulations to reduce intake of gamefish

Fisher behavior (1 group)

- Catch and release for certain species at certain times of year

Promote abundant fish and sustainable fisheries (1 group)



Stakeholders share small group discussion results, which are recorded on flip charts.

Part III: Next Steps: where do we go from here?

Stakeholders agreed to focus on further narrowing the list at the next meeting in March.

Joy stated that a workshop report will be distributed to participants as soon as possible before the next meeting.

Participants suggested they would invite others for the next forum and try to engage a broad range of local stakeholders. They want to increase representation of commercial anglers and local government officials. Researchers would invite local scientists to speak during forum meetings.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Charlotte Harbor Forum is scheduled for **March 26, 2015**.