

# CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM: MEETING IV SUMMARY REPORT



# CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM:

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



Photo: J. Struve

**March 26<sup>th</sup>, 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 next meeting of the Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum!**

**Speaker:** Captain Betty Staugler  
Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent Charlotte County

**Meeting goals:** to further narrow down and decide on key topics

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**Forum Partners:**

**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**



**Sea Grant**  
Florida

**Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum 4 – March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.**  
**Laishley Marina.**  
**120 Laishley Ct., Punta Gorda, FL. 33950**

**Report**

On Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 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.

Forty three stakeholders signed in at this fourth 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. University of Florida graduate student Chelsey Crandall and researcher Dr. Jynessa Dutka-Gianelli led and facilitated the meeting. Florida Sea Grant extension agent Captain Betty Staugler (Charlotte County), and University of Florida professors Dr. Kai Lorenzen and Dr. Juliane Struve 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 meeting were to further narrow down and decide on key topics, and begin categorizing these topics. After the research team introductions, 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 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 Van Hubbard. Then, Captain Betty Staugler gave a presentation about the different projects conducted in Charlotte Harbor area by the Florida Sea Grant agency. Stakeholders engaged in an active discussion about the interesting projects conducted in the area, and later, some participants expressed their wish to volunteer.

**Forum Activity I:**

Facilitator Chelsey Crandall led the next forum activity, which focused on participants working in small groups to select potential topics for future forum discussions to focus on, and answer the following questions for each topic:

- What does it mean?
- What can the forum do?
- What agencies/etc. are involved (who has the power)?
- Which stakeholders is this important to?

Participants were asked to write their answers in flash cards, and then, each small group presented their ideas to the whole group.

**Activity Results:**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>What is it?</b>	<b>What could the forum do?</b>	<b>Who has the power?</b>	<b>Who is this important to?</b>
<b>Alteration of natural habitat</b>	Reduction in amount, change in type, and the effects of inhabitability	Education on causes of degradation, could be liaison between agency and stakeholders	DEP, SWFWMD, EPA, FWC, assessment organizations, regulations	All-to be used as habitat (target species and prey), aesthetics, water quality
<b>Selected closure zones</b>	Close man made canals to netting (recreational, commercial)	Come to consensus that this is a good idea, petition the County Commission to act	FWC, local elected, county commission	Commercial fishers, homeowners, recreational fishers
<b>Boater licensing</b>	Requiring all boaters to take an education course before being allowed to operate a vessel in Florida could prevent some of the problems such as seagrass damage	Develop a recommendation of what boaters need to know to operate a vessel safely and without damaging the environment, bring the issue to FWC's attention	FWC, law enforcement, possibly state legislation	All of them
<b>Pole and troll</b>	This can effect water quality, habitat, boaters, promote	Determine recommendations: what area and size, how to enforce: volunteer enforcement (neighborhood watch)	FWC, county sheriff, citizens awareness	All/fish
<b>Pole and troll</b>			County commission, FWC	All stakeholders
<b>Bait scarcity</b>	Moving to other locations, overfished; water quality; Tied in to several other topics: habitat, commercial fishing, temperature, noise	Who has the data? Find out, what type of data is available, shrimping statistics, help fill in data gaps, inform and educate stakeholders (point paper, presentations/prizes at clubs, schools)	FWC , NOAA, CHNEP, City Commission	All on list developed at meeting III and Fish
<b>Mullet fishing</b>	Killing too many animals; killing way to much fishes, not just mullet	Lobby for change in regulatory framework and enforcement, lack of political will to protect the fishing stocks	Judges allow wanton misconduct. Stronger regulation and enforcement thereof. Law enforcement	Important to all stakeholders
<b>Conservation</b>	Following regulations, catch and release practices, proper handling/ dehooking, keeping education up to date	Educate	Law enforcement, outreach agencies	Anglers, resource users and future users (in state and out of state)

**Additional topics listed on cards:**

Habitat loss of grassbeds (remedy pole and troll), loss of food (bait) limit mullet fishing

Fishing pressure: limit tournaments, limit dragging harbor with nets

Longer term: address water quality

Shrimp

Mullet

Boat prop scars

Habitat

Commercial fishing

Mitigate destruction of habitat (sea grass, oyster bars, etc.)

Mitigate harvesting of bait fish/food supply for fish

Evaluate water quality parameters important to health of harbor

Acknowledge and investigate discrepancy between independent monitoring/science and dependent monitoring (anecdotal)

Get better input/involvement from all of the communities impacted by the health and well-being of Charlotte Harbor (provide summary updates, focus/narrow down, not expand).

**Next Steps: where do we go from here?**

Participants elected to have a speaker on pole and troll zones at the next meeting.

Next Forum: April/ 23rd.