

CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM: MEETING VI SUMMARY REPORT



Photo: B. Staugler



CHARLOTTE HARBOR FISHERIES FORUM:

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



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May 28, 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!

Meeting objectives: *to explore different pole-and-troll case-studies in Florida; to discuss broader goals for a local pole-and-troll zone plan.*

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Forum Partners:

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA



Sea Grant
Florida

Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Forum 6 – May 28, 2015.

Laishley Marina.

120 Laishley Ct., Punta Gorda, FL. 33950

Report

On Thursday, May 28, 2015, Florida Sea Grant Extension and the University of Florida (UF) convened the sixth 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, media, fliers distributed locally, and personal invitations.

Thirty four stakeholders signed in for the meeting, including recreational and commercial fishers, local fishing club members, charter captains and guides, business owners, part-time residents, researchers, tourism personnel, natural resources manager, and law enforcement.

Florida Sea Grant extension agents Captain Betty Staugler (Charlotte County) and Joy Hazell (Lee County) led and facilitated the meeting. University of Florida professor Dr. Kai Lorenzen, graduate student Chelsey Crandall, and researcher Dr. Jynessa Dutka-Gianelli 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 explore different pole-and-troll case studies in Florida and to discuss broader goals for a local pole-and-troll zone plan.

After the research team introductions, Captain Betty Staugler explained the meeting agenda. Next, the stakeholders introduced themselves and identified how many of the previous fisheries forum in Charlotte Harbor they had participated in: 14 individuals were participating in the forum for the first time, and among the 20 participants that had participated in previous fisheries forums, 8 individuals were present in all previous meetings.

Forum Activities:

Pole-and-troll case-studies:

Captain Betty Staugler presented a series of five pole-and-troll case studies from Florida to illustrate the pole-and-troll zone goals, mechanisms, agencies, key stakeholders involved, who has the power, how is the access to the zone, sources of funding for start-up and for long-term maintenance, how is the enforcement, and examples of education and outreach programs.

The case-studies presented were:

- Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Mosquito Lagoon
- Everglades National Park
- Little Cockroach Bay
- Lee County Navigation Channel (NGP)
- Pinellas County – several boating restriction zones.

Some participants presented their input during the case-study discussions and facilitator Joy Hazell summarized a list of the topics:

General discussion

- Concerns about giving a little and losing a lot
- Not worth saving if you can't use it
- Some reason to have place where humans can't go- can't be disproportionate
- Concerns about population increase
- Different goals will lead to different areas and sizes of zones
 - o i.e., mitigation for dredging versus fisheries enhancement

Commercial discussion

- Decisions lean in one direction
 - o Commercial/charter/recreational all have stakes and should work together but it isn't easy/doesn't work
- Create a plan (meeting of minds) allow access to commercial fisherman who aren't the problem
- Pole and troll zones in near wall would put commercial out of business
- Out of town commercial fishing is a problem/issue
- Desire for inclusive voice
- Plan to allow full access to commercial guys (runs) in pole and troll zones

Map activity:

Facilitator Joy Hazell led the next forum activity, in which participants worked in small groups in a map-guided brainstorm. Participants were asked to discuss and circle areas in the map where they thought pole-and-troll zones should be adopted, and to write the reasons on sticky notes. Next, each small group presented their ideas to the whole group, which are summarized below:

Why a pole and troll zone?

- Protect habitat
- Protect seagrass
- Fishing
- Lots of boaters/traffic in certain areas
- Run bar without burning shoreline
- Address declining fish stocks
- Why is 'protect fishing' not enough? Ride on coattails of manatees/seagrass?
- Create a place where fish can go be fish/habitat can be habitat
- Surround bird rookery islands
- Reduce boat traffic
- Safety for wade fishing

Concerns about a pole and troll zone

- Cautionary: snowball potential

- Won't get boating safety
- Airboats: would shut it down. Exception?
- Need to clarify: all engines off? Travel corridors?
- Safety for mullet fishermen in inclement weather: need to run in
- Crab traps: need to make sure can still run motors, don't need to plane up in the islands
- Mullet fishermen: have to run

Additional thoughts

- Need to know who causes the damage
- What are we trying to protect?
- What is damaging fishing?
- Size is very important to what it restricts
- Close canals for mullet: have somewhere to go
- Need access-mark more than non-access will work for all
- Take care of special interests
 - o Permits
- Imaginary line PGI-Ponce de Leon
 - o Can't use nets there (mullet), concern

Next Steps: where do we go from here?

It was suggested that during the next forum the group should discuss:

- Idle zones instead of pole and troll?
- Specifics: who, what, how fix real problems
- Buy in: make sure commercial fishermen still able to fish
- Establish what people need
- Agree that fishing has declined, want to improve
- Why decline? Understand
 - o Water quality
- Commit commercial guys to return
- Good representation
 - o Missing? Geographic areas?

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.

Next Forum: June / 25.