

BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

WORKING GROUP

Meeting #2
February 23, 2004
8:00 am to 4:30 pm

John D. Campbell Agricultural Center
Homestead, Florida

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair of the Group, Jack Curlett, welcomed everyone to the second meeting. He asked that all members introduce themselves as several new members were present who had been unable to attend the first meeting. He then reminded everyone of the extensive amount of time that has been devoted to the initial development of the Fisheries Management Plan prior to this Group having been formed. He thanked everyone for their accomplishments at the first meeting and expressed confidence in the Group's expertise and ability to accomplish the task assigned to them in the next few meetings.

He then turned the meeting over to Dr. Todd Kellison, Biscayne National Park project manager for the Fisheries Management Plan.

MISSION/LEGISLATION AND CHARGE TO THE GROUP

Dr. Kellison reviewed a powerpoint presentation with the Group which outlined the history, mission and legislation which formed the genesis of the Fisheries Management Plan and then reviewed the charter which established this Working Group. (Exhibit A). He explained that this Plan is a partnership effort between the National Park Service-Biscayne National Park (BNP) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Dr. Kellison emphasized that this Group has been formed to identify and make recommendations with regard to fisheries only. While BNP is also developing a General Management Plan, which will encompass a wide range of issue categories (one or two of which will be considered by this Working Group) the sole focus for this Group is fisheries. Because there is so much work to be done in a short amount of time, it is important that the Group stay focused.

In response to member inquiries regarding how the Chair of this Working Group was selected, Dr. Kellison and Chair Jack Curlett explained the process by which a Chair is selected for any Working Group of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC). The procedures of the SAC require that a member of the SAC sit as the Chair.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Members of the Group made the following comments and inquiries:

- 1) Please inform the Group of the time frame for seeing a completed Plan after this Group's work is done (Park responded that the hope is to complete the process by the end of 2004).
- 2) Is it possible for the representatives from this Group to make a report to the State and Park at end of its work
- 3) SAC members are on team

As a final comment, the Facilitator, Janice Fleischer, reminded the Group members that they were selected because of their reputations for knowledge within their areas in connection with fisheries. Each Group Member is a representative of an entire constituency, not just a personal voice. It is the responsibility of each member of the Group to speak on behalf of their constituency and to assist others on the Group who may have differing concerns or needs to accomplish their goals as well.

AGENDA REVIEW/GUIDELINES

The Facilitator, Janice Fleischer, then reviewed the Agenda for the day (Exhibit B) and the Group's adopted Meeting Guidelines (Exhibit C). She also had the Group clarify and ratify the Consensus Rules they had adopted at the last meeting (Exhibit D).

She announced that all Reports of Proceedings of these meetings, along with specified documents and other information (i.e. the Memorandum of Understanding between BNP and FWC, a Peer Review Report and a document on Site Characteristics) will appear on the SFRPC Institute's website at www.sfrpc.com/institute/projects.htm (this site will contain links to the National Park Service-BISC website). Anyone who does not have access to email and would like copies of any documents can contact Dr. Todd Kellison at 305-230-1144 x3081.

As a final procedural item, Ms. Fleischer handed out a flowchart explaining the process to be used in developing the fisheries recommendations (Exhibit E).

RESULTS OF ISSUE GROUPINGS-MEETING #1

BNP and FWC, prior to the establishment of this Group and subsequent to a lengthy public input process, had drafted four initial fisheries issue groupings. Ms. Fleischer asked the Group to review the transcripts of the first meeting to see that the issues generated by the Group fit well into the established format of the draft document, with two exceptions: two new categories had been added: Law Enforcement and Park Operations. In keeping with the focus of this Group, BNP and FWC suggested that the sixth category of Park Operations is outside the scope of this Group and should be eliminated as a new category. Any issues related to fisheries in this area can be incorporated into the remaining five categories if needed. The Group agreed to keep the fifth category of Law Enforcement.

Ms. Fleischer reiterated that, while the Draft document seems to work well, it is expected and encouraged that the Group, based on their individual and collective knowledge of the Bay, will provide recommended changes and refinements.

VALUES AND VISION

The Facilitator explained that, in order for this Group to accomplish its task of making recommendations for consideration by the SAC, the National Park Service-BISC and FWC, regarding fisheries, they must first establish a set of values they will work by and a Vision Statement for the future of the Bay and its fisheries.

After handing out the definition of a “value” (Exhibit F), Ms. Fleischer led the Group in a brainstorming exercise during which Group members took turns listing values, refined this list by combining those values which the Group felt were similar, and finally, indicating the top five (Core Values) by having each Group member place one dot by the five values they felt were most important. The results of this exercise are shown below:

VALUE	DOTS
1. Productive	15
2. Rewarding (combined with #3-Enjoyable)	10
3. Enjoyable (combined with #2-Rewarding)	
4. Sustainable	13
5. Abundant (<i>meaning health, range of ages, numbers</i>)	
6. Proprietary	
7. Robust (<i>size</i>)	
8. Pristine (combined with #11-Natural and #27-Attractive)	6
9. Challenging	
10. Diverse	3
11. Natural (combined with #8-Pristine and #27-Attractive)	
12. Peaceful (combined with #13-Tranquil and #14-Relaxing)	3
13. Tranquil (combined with #12-Peaceful and #14-Relaxing)	
14. Relaxing (combined with #12-Peaceful and #13-Tranquil)	
15. Accessible	11
16. Safe	
17. Balance (combined with #22-Harmony)	
18. Managed	5
19. Measureable	1
20. Healthy (<i>to eat</i>)	
21. Recreational	
22. Harmony	
23. Sound Science	8
24. Economic Viability	8
25. Multi-Use	7
26. Resource Protection	9
27. Attractive (combined with #8-Pristine)	
28. Improving	2
29. Education	7
30. Non-destructive	6
31. Edibility (<i>health</i>)	1
32. Reproduction	

CORE VALUES

- 1) Productive
- 2) Sustainable
- 3) Accessible
- 4) Rewarding/Enjoyable
- 5) Resource Protection

Following the designation of the Group's five "Core Values", the Facilitator explained what a vision was and handed out a Vision Statement Worksheet (Exhibit G) for use by the Group members in drafting their Vision Statement. She broke the Group into three small groups and asked them each to draft a Vision Statement utilizing the worksheet based on the following assumption: "It is 20 years from now, with regard to fishing resources and the fishing experience, what do you see and feel?"

Each small group drafted a statement. All three statements were displayed electronically and the Group as a whole went through an exercise of combining and adopting parts of each draft vision to create their final Vision Statement.

Draft Vision Statements (words indicated in red were recommendations of tense change made by the Facilitator in order to keep the Vision in the future and as if the action had been accomplished)

GROUP 1: *Our vision is a thriving healthy environment with diverse and abundant wildlife. The marine resources should be **are** used in a sustainable manner and enjoyed now and in the future. We anticipate **(have)** science-based management with educated stakeholder input and support for protection of fisheries resources and to promote productive and peaceful Park experiences.*

GROUP 2: *The Fisheries Management Plan should **has** produced sustainable, healthy, diverse and resilient fish populations supported by a healthy, undamaged habitat. Fish populations should **are** be allowed to recover to past abundance. Voluntary compliance should be **is** encouraged through education and outreach efforts that build awareness of rules and acceptable behavior on the water. Channel markers and signage must be **have been** improved. Management should **has built** build an ethic of mutual respect of **both the** environment and other users.*

GROUP 3: *Biscayne National Park is a national ecological treasure providing a productive improving fishery accessible to multiple user groups to provide an enjoyable and rewarding experience attained through education, consensus building and resource management.*

FINAL VISION STATEMENT

"Biscayne National Park is a national ecological treasure providing premier fishing activities. It is a thriving healthy environment with diverse and abundant marine resources. Fishery resources are sustainable, healthy and resilient, supported by a healthy, natural habitat. Consensus building through educated stakeholder input has built an ethic of mutual respect encouraging the use of science-based management for protection of fisheries resources. Education and outreach efforts have fostered voluntary protection of Park resources by building support for rules and regulations and responsible behavior on the water. Park rules and regulations are enforced effectively and uniformly. These measures allow an enjoyable Park experience."

Members then broke for lunch.

DRAFT DOCUMENT RANKING- CATEGORIES AND FUTURE CONDITIONS

The intent of this exercise was for the Group to review each category drafted by National Park Service (NPS) and FWC in their draft document (Exhibit H) and rank each section as a whole, then rank and comment on each sub-category. The name of the draft document is “Fishery Issues and Potential Future Conditions of Fishery Resources and Fishing Experience in Biscayne National Park”. Each sub category has 4 potential future conditions for management actions, from “leaving the status quo” to making extensive changes in management actions in the future. A fifth option is “Other suggestions” and is indicated by the letter “E”. Members were asked, by a show of hands, which of the future conditions presented they preferred. Subsequent to their ranking, members were asked to comment. The results of the first two categories’ ranking and comments are shown below:

Category 1: Populations of Exploited Fish & Shellfish

Sub-Category 1.1: *The abundance and average size of fish (that are subject to take and spend a significant portion of their lives within the Park) relative to those fish in similar fished habitats outside the Park.*

A – 0 B – 5 C – 10 D – 5 E – 2 (22 votes)

- Increase needed but not sure how much – need to be reasonable to make progress
- Show me data
- Different species with different life – all are fished – no virgin populations – all need improvement
- Need to know new Park specific actions – what are they?
- Do State and Federal governments have same feelings about the Park data?
- List of overfished species
- C or D could just be an enforcement issue
- Relax 95% confidence
- Look carefully at how you track average size – “average size above legal size”
- Is there a funding issue? What are costs associated with increases?
- Scientific folks needed to decide on percentages – more information needed for non-science folks
- We want more and bigger fish but problem with categories we have – how you measure
- Can’t do stock assessment inside Park only – need to raise level of production within and outside of Park to achieve overall

Sub-Category 1.2: *Future abundance and average size of fish within the Park (that are subject to take and spend a significant portion of their lives within the Park) relative to current levels.*

A - 0 B - 1 C - 4 D - 7 E - 8 (20 votes)

- Does real life experience (hours on the water) coincide with scientific information?

At this point in the exercise, members clearly stated that they were not comfortable attempting to rank these future conditions without further information. Further, the Park and the State indicated that it was their desire that the Members indicate their future desired conditions based on their own “on water” experiences and individual knowledge of the Bay. The Park and the State explained that the members on this Working Group were chosen due to their vast knowledge and experience with fisheries in the Bay

and outside waters. The Park and State did not want the members to focus on the scientific information provided as background, but rather on their own observations and experience.

Due to this, the ranking exercise was stopped. The Facilitator asked the members how they would suggest proceeding with the ultimate goal of having the group recommend preferred desired future conditions for each fishery sub category. The members asked to be allowed to have a general discussion of each sub category and then they would be better able to make recommendations. The first two sub categories were discussed and the comments of members are reflected below.

General Discussion

Sub-Category 1.1: The abundance and average size of fish (that are subject to take and spend a significant portion of their lives within the Park) relative to those fish in similar fished habitats outside the Park.

- Hard to say in/outside – species different at different times of year
- A lot of undersized species
- Develop some close seasons when fish spawning in/out Park
- There's a “no take” period for commercial fisherman, same needs to be done for recreational fisherman for certain species
- There are fish problems outside the Park, too. Focus on what can be done inside the park that will help populations inside and outside the Park.
- Biscayne is openly accessible to fish and fishermen. Need regional improvements inside and outside the Park. Proximity of large urban population impacts the Park.
- Need better enforcement regarding size and quantities taken.
- Need better, more uniform measurement guidelines
- Would like a comparison of abundance and size of different species inside and outside the Park based on fishermen's experience
- Bonefish populations have decreased markedly (~95%) in the Park, better outside the Park in the Keys; size of bonefish have remained about the same – inadequate food sources to support larger populations
- Yellowtail Snapper are more abundant and larger at the south end of the Park – balance in nature
- Shrimp populations are stronger in the Park. Wing-netters are virtually gone.
- Mackerel, pompano, bluefish, sea trout populations are down in the Bay.
- Have requirements for fishing in the Park similar to requirements for driving an ORV in Big Cypress (view educational video, etc.)
- Licensing should require education/testing (bilingual)
- Signage indicating species to be found and size limitations
- Water quality affects fish populations – freshwater run-off
- Reduced fish size over time, smaller than they used to be. Due to more use of the Park and fishing outside the Park?
- Wingnetters aren't working in the Park
- Should have higher standards due to National Park status (should be better than surrounding areas)
- Species must be protected regionally, management can't be based upon getting fish to reproductive size in one specific area.

Sub-Category 1.2 *Future abundance and average size of fish within the Park (that are subject to take and spend a significant portion of their lives within the Park) relative to current levels.*

- Have a biologist comment on growth patterns on different fish species to set minimum size limits – at what size do they reproduce?
- Control size limits, bag limits and effort (how much effort does it take to catch fish... number of lines in the water, etc.) to control fish sizes in the Park
- Other factors should be considered besides size limits
- Consider life span of species and reproductive potential when setting limits

At this point, the meeting was adjourned, with this discussion to continue at the next meeting. Subsequent to open discussion, members will be asked to take part in an exercise designed to assist them in drafting preferred future conditions for each sub category.

The Facilitator reminded everyone to fill in their Evaluations and announced that the next meeting is March 23, 2004 at the same location, the John Campbell Agricultural Center.