

Overview of Oyster Management in Florida



Apalachicola Bay System Initiative

May 22, 2020



Outline

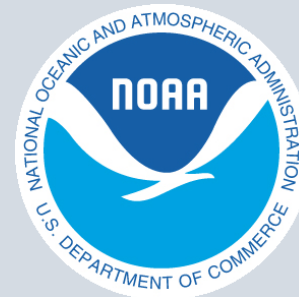
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

- Role in Oyster Management
- Management Authority
- Management Process



Oyster Fisheries in Florida

- Co-managed by several state and federal agencies/organizations
- Varying degree of involvement or authority
 - Wild-harvest management (FWC)
 - Aquaculture (FDACS)
 - Food safety (FDACS)
 - Habitat and water quality (FWC, FDEP, FDACS)
 - Research and industry development (FWC, FDACS, FDA, Sea Grant)



FWC's Role In Wild Harvested Oyster Management

- **Management:** Division of Marine Fisheries Management
- **Enforcement:** Division of Law Enforcement
- **Restoration:** HSC Marine Estuarine Subsection, FWRI
- **Monitoring:** FWRI

| Current Commercial Regulations (68B-27, FAC) | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Statewide | Apalachicola |
| Bag limit | 20 bags | 2 bags |
| Seasons | Oct. 1 – June 30 | Summer: June 1 – Aug. 31 Winter: Sept. 1 – May 31 |
| Licensing | SPL, Shellfish endorsement | SPL, Shellfish endorsement, AP license |
| Size limit | 3" (tolerance: 15% attached, 5% unattached) | |
| Allowable gear | Hand or tongs | |
| FDACS training | Shellfish Harvester & Aquaculture Training Course (<i>renewed annually</i>) | |
| FDACS closures | Harvest subject to daily closures for seafood safety concerns | |



Apalachicola Bay: conservation/harvest areas, seasons, and bag limit modified by EO in recent years

FWC Management Authority

- **Commission** – Seven members (Commissioners)
 - Appointed by Governor, confirmed by Legislature

Authority

- Authority in state waters provided by Florida Constitution
 - *“The commission shall exercise the regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to wild animal life and fresh water aquatic life, ... and marine life...”*
- Authority to enforce regulations in federal waters
- FWC does not have direct authority over:
 - Fines and penalties
 - Licensing fees
 - Florida Statutes enacted by Legislature



FWC Management Process

Annual workplan

- Outlines and prioritizes topics intended to be addressed
- Presented and approved/modified by Commission
- FY19/20: 50 items, 10 new
- “Fly-in” items re-focus or shift priorities

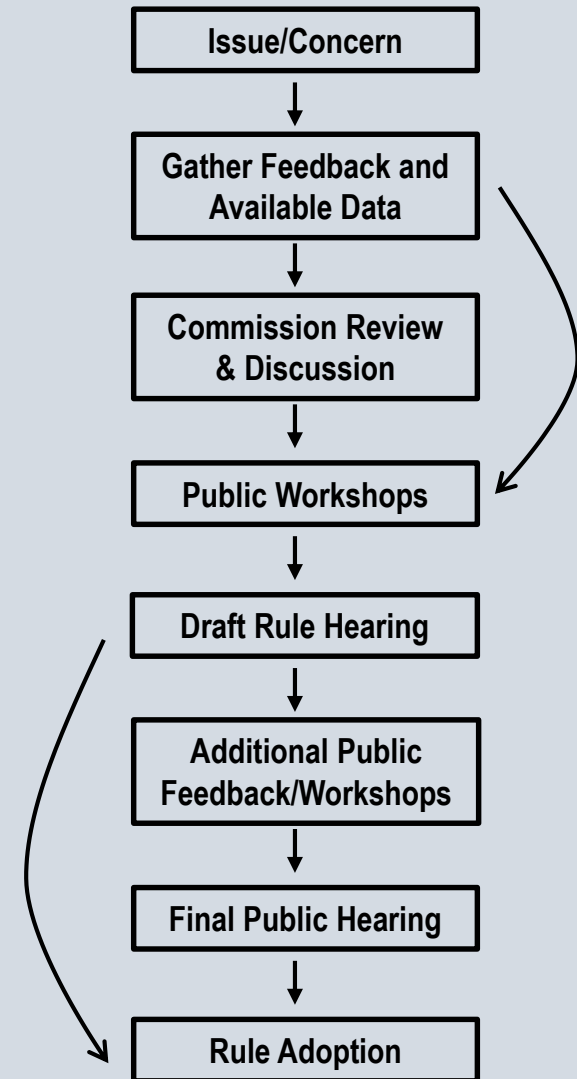
| Proposed 2019-2020 Workplan Items | | |
|---|---|--|
| HIGH | MEDIUM | LOW |
| <p>Blue Heron Bridge Irma & Michael Recovery Permit Aquaculture Yellowtail Snapper</p> | <p>Limits on Otherwise Unregulated Species RS Qualification Spearing Issues Dolphin</p> | |
| <p>Agency Strategic Planning Bay Scallops Biscayne National Park Corals Habitat and Water Quality Lionfish Oysters Rule Cleanup Sharks Shrimp Snook and Red Drum Spotted Seatrout Trap Fisheries Management Federal Legislation Goliath Grouper Gulf Reef Fish Survey Expansion IFQ 5-Year Review Red Snapper Sector Reallocation</p> | <p>Blackfin Tuna Citizen Science Fisheries Management Outreach Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Planning Flounder Import Size Limits Lobster Trap Exclusion Zones in Pennekamp Mullet Predator Species and Nuisance Behavior SAL Updates Spot and Atlantic Croaker Atlantic Deepwater Species Cobia Electronic Reporting Mangrove Snapper</p> | <p>Cownose Rays Horseshoe Crab Marine Life Management (aquarium trade) Orange Cup Coral Slipper Lobster Blueline Tilefish</p> |
| <p>Blue = Federal item = New = Carry-over</p> | | |



FWC Management Process (cont'd)

- Annual workplan
- Data collection and analysis
- Staff recommendation
 - Science- and stakeholder-driven
- Rulemaking
 - Recommendation presented to Commission
 - Publicly-attended Commission meeting
 - Typically two-step process: Draft, Final

Decisions to approve, modify, or reject management recommendations made by Commissioners



Oyster Projects Across Florida's Northern Gulf Coast

- Apalachicola Bay System Initiative (FSU)
 - Research track to gain insight on oyster declines
 - Community Advisory Board
- Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration – Phase I
- Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration – Phase II
 - Multiple partnerships: FSU/ABSI, UF, FDACS
 - Extensive restoration and management plan
 - Suwannee Sound: baseline oyster assessment and management plan
- Florida Oyster Recovery Science Working Group
- Greater Pensacola Bay System O-EBFM Workgroup
- *Multiple other projects being conducted or developed*

